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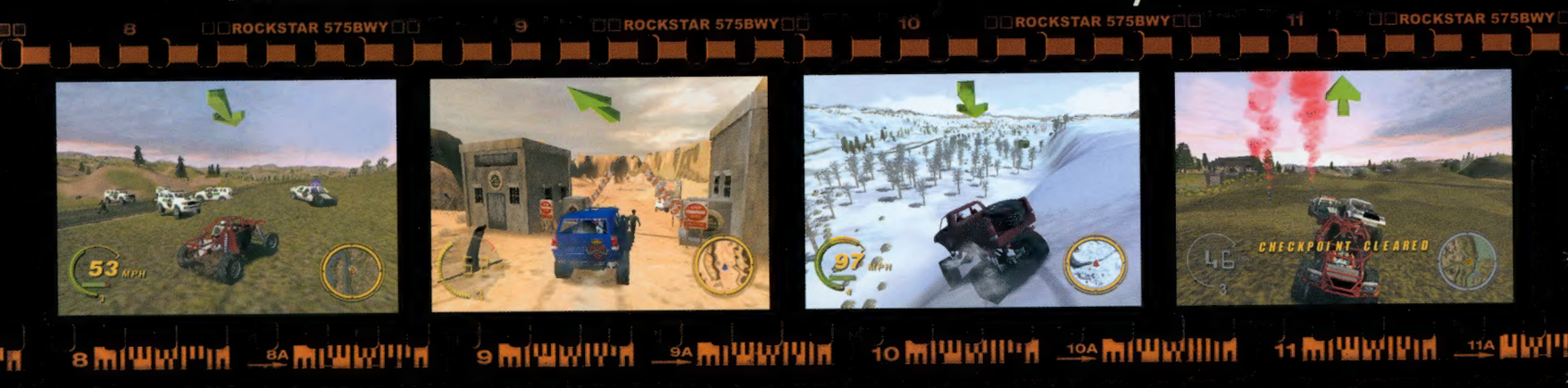

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PSE2

THE PLAYER'S GUIDE TO THE WORLD OF PLAYSTATION

Volume 1 • Issue 4 • January 2001

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THE ISSUE AT HAND

Allow me to start off this editorial with a big congratulations to those of you who were lucky and diligent enough to get your hands around a PlayStation 2 on October 26th. I'm sure all of you have crazy launch-day stories to tell. I know from firsthand experience how easy it is to get caught up in the excitement of a new hardware launch — especially one for such an amazing piece of technology. It

It's funny, you would think that I would be the last person to go out and stand in line for an American PS2. Having spent 28 hours waiting in line in Tokyo for a Japanese unit, and then getting a PS2 debug unit a few months ago (which plays both Japanese and US betas), there really was no reason for me to get a US machine. But, like everyone else, I just couldn't help myself and headed out the door at 3:30 in the morning to stand in line at my local Target. In my mind, knowing the difference between the fanatical Japanese gamers and US gamers, I thought that even with the reported shortage, 3:30 am was a little extreme — let alone getting in line the day before. I figured I would be one of five freaks crazy enough to go out in the rain and get soaked waiting for a game machine. Boy, was I wrong!

When I got to Target approximately 20 minutes later, there were already upwards of 150 people in line — and this was for a store that reportedly only had 29 units available for sale. The wild goose chase that ensued was a comedy of errors, as myself and the self-proclaimed "Pickle King" (don't ask) frantically drove from city to city and store to store, desperately searching for a spot no one else would have thought of. Of course, as the clock ticked down and the sun came up, the lines only grew larger at each consecutive stop. My last desperate attempt was a Super K in one of the worst neighborhoods in the Bay Area, where Pickle and I barely managed to escape a riot when the store manager announced they only had seven units for sale (there were well over 40 people in line). Even my sweet and beautiful girlfriend (I can always use bonus points) who doesn't play video games (although she is getting into Summoner) got caught up in the launch-day frenzy, and waited in line for over an hour at her local Circuit City, only to end up being number eight and the store only had six units.

Senior Editor Mark Androvich had a similar experience (which you can read all about in this issue's News section), although he was actually one of the lucky owners in the end. Don't fret for me though. The silver lining at the end of my sad story is that I headed back to the office in bumper-to-bumper traffic with a heavy heart and my head hanging low, only to find that Sony had been nice enough to send out boxed units to all of the gaming press. Who knew!? For those of you who weren't fortunate enough to get a PS2 on day one, my advice would be to not give up and keep checking with your local retailers. Sony is starting to pump units into the pipeline and you should be able to get one before X-Mas. At the very least, if you aren't able to get one by then, there should be plenty available after the holidays and, according to Dave's Final Word Column this issue, there will also be a plethora of bargain software waiting for you as well.

Moving right along to this month's issue, we have a lot of good stuff for you. To start, we've got another batch of PS2 games reviewed — 13 to be exact — as well as some exclusive previews (including MDK2: Armageddon, Donald Duck: Goin' Quackers, Twisted Metal: Black and Klonoa 2). In addition, we have another whopping 26 PSOne games reviewed — it doesn't look like the 32-bit games are going away any time soon — as well as all of the rest of the prerequisite PlayStation goods (codes, news, letters, previews, etc.). As always, we'll see you right back here in a short 30 days. Thanks for reading!

GREG
off@psextreme.com

EDITOR BIOS

GARY STRASSBERG

Ever since his PS2 arrived on launch day, Gary's become a ghost to his family and friends, who simply can't compete with Sony's miraculous black box. We hear that he stocked up on launch titles and went into hibernation for the winter — and at this point, nothing short of GT3 is likely to lure him out of seclusion!

CURRENTLY PLAYING

Midnight Club
Armored Core 2
Tekken Tag
Unreal Tournament
Smuggler's Run
Kessen

GREG OFF

Greg is glad the launch day has finally came and gone. After spending 28 hours in line on the streets of Tokyo for a Japanese PS2 back in March, he was not going to let the mean streets of Foster City hold him back from getting an American unit... Sadly, he failed, but thankfully Sony came to the rescue! A shout goes out to Molly, Charlotte and the rest of the peeps!

CURRENTLY PLAYING

Rayman Revolution
Sky Odyssey
Tomb Raider Chronicles
Shen Mue
Jet Grind Radio

DARIEN ALLEN

Darien secured his PlayStation2 a day late due to some shipping problems. He drove us ALL crazy for that one extra day. Now, his latest concern is that we don't pay him enough to afford all of the games the he wants to buy. Funny, we didn't realize we were paying him at all.

CURRENTLY PLAYING

WWF: No Mercy
Test Drive: Lemans
Smackdown 2

DAVE WINDING

Dave has spent the better part of the past couple of weeks catching up on games he's been missing — primarily on PS2 and Dreamcast. It's that time of year where the floodgates open and the software comes raging into retail — only now it's on four platforms (plus PC).

CURRENTLY PLAYING

SSX
Jet Grind Radio
No One Lives 4ever
NFL 2K1
Madden 2001
Shenmue

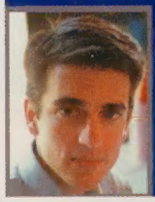
TIM LINDQUIST

The PS2 US launch fever caught Tim and he's gone on a console gaming spree. Sticking to PC and arcade games for the past year or so, he suddenly found he had three consoles sitting on his desk that weren't there a week ago (PS2, Dreamcast and N64). He nearly spent more time arranging than playing to be able to see the monitor with two PC's and a Mac also fighting for desktop space. What a wonderful dilemma.

CURRENTLY PLAYING

Unreal Tournament
Majora's Mask
Smuggler's Run
Ghouls 'n' Ghosts
SSX
SF Rush 2049

MARK ANDROVICH



Mark is still hoping for a recount of the Homecoming King balloting from 1984, citing female voter confusion. After he spent hours in the early morning cold and rain to snag a PS2, his son asked him to hook up the Super Nintendo to play Super Mario World instead. Which he did. What a Dad.

CURRENTLY PLAYING

Shenmue
Jet Grind Radio
Time Splitters
Smuggler's Run
Skullmonkeys

ERIC WINDING

Eric recently returned from a trip to Las Vegas, and has vowed to cancel his future journeys to Paris, Egypt, New York, Portland, Italy, and Mr. Peabody's Way-Back Machine. Yes, it seems as though "Vegas" has everything Eric ever wanted to see, so he finds no reason to go anywhere else. Ever.

CURRENTLY PLAYING

Spyro 3
Mario Golf
The Land Before Time
ESPN Int'l T & F
FreeCell

"THE ULTIMATE GETAWAY GAME GETS EVEN BETTER"
PSM Magazine, July 2000

"STRAP ON YOUR SEATBELT FOR THE MOST EXPLOSIVE DRIVING EXPERIENCE SINCE THE PINTO"
Incite, July 2000

"...AN ALL-OUT BETTER WHEELMAN EXPERIENCE"
Gamespot, August 2000

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THERE'S SOMETHING GOING DOWN ON THE STREETS. AN INTERNATIONAL MOB WAR HAS ERUPTED, SPILLING BLOOD ACROSS TWO CONTINENTS IN A HAIL OF BULLETS. BUT IT'S JUST ANOTHER DAY AT THE OFFICE FOR ONE COP. ONE COP WITH ONE NAME. DRIVER™ 2 STARRING TANNER.

PlayStation

REFLECTIONS

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INFOGRAMES

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This issue's entire news section is devoted to the story of one man's quest to procure a US PS2. After all, there isn't much news worth reporting other than the US PS2 launch!

Codes 16
With the launch of the US PS2, we can now enjoy a full compliment of codes for PS2 games. That's right, folks. We've got the ones you've been hoping for. Travel with thy controller in hand to a land where cheaters really do prosper™.

Peripherals 18
With the PS2 being able to play DVDs, yet not coming with a 'mote, more than one company sees the opportunity to cash in on the DVD-hungry-gamer-couch-potato market! Yeee haaa! Check out which one we think is the best.

Cover Story 22
We're talking little green and tan soldiers. We're talking fleshy, green-haired hotties in tight khakis. We're talking genre-crossing, trash-talking, hard-core heroes. We're talkin' wife-swappin'! (No, not really.)

Features 28
If you happened to be yearning for a Crash Bandicoot-style action/platform PS2 game, you're in a bucket of luck. That's right b-i-double-itchies!! It's Donald Duck. It's just like Crash, so check it out!

Features 30
It's time for a darker, harder, meaner Twisted Metal. We want it to be made by the original team and we want it on the PS2. What we want, we take, what we don't, we break. We don't want no junky car combat games, so you better not make one or we'll break it. Got that?

Features 32
If you weren't yearning for a Crash-style a/p game, and instead were yearning for a Fighting Force-style beat 'em-up with RPG elements, well... you should check out what we have to say. It's The B ouncer.

Features 34
The four-armed dog, the kooky doctor and the nut in the fancy, pointy-faced suit are headed for the PS2 in one of the nicest looking shooters you've ever seen on any system. What's new for the PS2 sku? Gotta read the article, man!

Features 36
What kind of freaky-cool Japanese-type action platform goodness-ness do you think you'll get from a company like Namco? The Klonoa kind, of course!

Previews 38
We've got some things to talk about here, with all the games coming out for PS2. It's so exciting, the system launch. Can you feel the electricity coming off the preview pages? It's charged. GBH.

Reviews 40
The PS2's only been out 2 months and we still have 13 new games to review. It's the craziest thing since that crazy election we had. Don't even think about it.

DVD 58
We got a little goofy again and went ahead with a DVD game review extravaganza. We tell it like it is with the DVD games which are ports of laserdisc games. We're good like that.

That crazy duck is hoppin' and a-jhumpin' all over the friggin' PS2.

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HOT TOPIC

The jiggly conspiracy.

You can't escape them. They're everywhere. You've seen them in games, ads for games, ads for beer, ads for cars, and anything else that may separate a man from his wallet. What are they? Breasts. And, in particular, women's breasts.

Not that I would need to be hit over the head to realize it, but EVERY single female character in video games has LARGE breasts. I guess we can blame the trend on Lara Croft, as other video game developers mistakingly believed the reason for the success of Tomb Raider was found in her bosom, and not in the concept or execution of the gameplay. I remember (3 years ago) meeting with the guys at Crystal Dynamics when they began working on Pandemonium! 2, and the focus of the meeting was not on anything regarding gameplay, but the commotion was on "how Nikki grew up". Meaning, of course, that she now had large breasts that were proudly on display for all to enjoy. BTW, I think Nikki is the name you give to a child that is certain to end up in the porno industry — I don't know why.

Anyway, the point is that the "message" has been clear for years now — give the female character a ton of cleavage, and then watch as the stupid male hordes buy it up faster than Playboys with Chyna on the cover (which, I might say, is one NASTY looking "woman") . With the PlayStation, it was easy to distinguish reality from fantasy. However, one look at the females in DOA2, Ready 2 Rumble 2, Time Splitters, TTT, and others, will suggest otherwise. There's so much jigglin' going on, I expect to see Al Bundy at the control of a DS2 at the PS2 kiosk in Toys R' Us saying, "whoa, mama". What gives? Can't ANY game feature women in their "natural" state. In case you haven't looked around lately, not every woman you see is a size DDD.

It may be the fact that I've got a little girl of my own now, but I can't help thinking that there are better images out there (for girls AND boys), other than half-naked cartoon characters running around with their breasts bouncing up and down.

Eric Winding

Dear PSE2,

I'm thrilled that your designer has 40 classic arcade machines in his house. Hell, if I had the money he obviously has, I would too. So far, I can't even afford the house to put them in. So, working from that statement, the inference is clear that only people with lots of money can be hard-core. Without all those machines, how can you be hard-core? The 'logic' is easy to follow. To me, in my world (which you admittedly don't live in), 'hard-core' is simply devotion to playing the games you love. Since I can't work, that's what I do, all day, every day.

I would like to make an observation, also. I feel I'm like most gamers: I buy a game, plug it in and play. That's the part of the gaming world I know. So what's with all the high-end tech talk? Anti-aliasing, bit-mapping, pre-rendered, clipping, draw-in, pop-up? If you're going to consistently use tech terms, you really should add a page to put definitions on. What does it mean that the sequel to my favorite game has addressed anti-aliasing issues? It might excite me more if I knew what it meant and what that means to playing my game.

Other than that, I love reading your mag. It's a real bright spot on the mag rack!

Dawn Lisowski
Trenton, NJ

We never implied that you have to have money to be a hard-core gamer. Our designer, with all the arcade games, has been finding, fixing and restoring arcade games since 1988. It's love, dedication and 12 years of searching that has gotten him 40 arcade games, not bags of money. You don't need a house to own them, either. Just somewhere to put them, like a garage or a kitchen or a bedroom.

As for the technical terms... they're not really technical. They're just the words gamers use to talk about the aspects of their games. You can't talk about gaming without knowing the gaming language. Here's a quick run-down for you:

Anti-aliasing: The technique of blurring hard edges to hide "jaggies", or jagged lines. Bit-maps: 2D graphics, or non-polygonal graphic data or textures. Pre-rendered: 3D environments that are premade instead of being generated on the spot. Clipping: Usually refers to white gaps between polygons. Pop-up: The effect of objects suddenly appearing out of nowhere in a 3D environment. Draw-in: see pop-up.

Dear PSE2,

I have a couple of questions about your article on FF9. First, in the picture of Zidane, it looks for all the world like he has a tail. What's up with that? Second, you said "Zidane Tribal (a mischievous 16 year old thief)". Then you mentioned "certain items will give character-specific abilities, such as giving Zidane the Steal ability". Excuse me? He's a thief — he can already steal. Or he's not a thief; you have to make him one. Which is it? It's like saying "he's an aquatic dweller, plus you can use items to let him breathe where he lives". Yippe! I need an item to make him into what he already is, and his history says he's been one for years? What the hell is this about?

By the way, you have a great mag!

Thanks,
Dawn Lisowski
Trenton, NJ

Yep, that's a tail. Yeah, okay, you got us on the inconsistency. We should have used a different ability or a different character as an example, but it was only an example. You can still understand what we were trying to convey about the game.

Dear PSE2,

I have a question about the PS2. Is the DVD player on it as good as the "original" DVD player? I've heard that it wasn't that good. I am considering buying a DVD player or a PS2 with the DVD player on it. But if the PS2's DVD player is just as good as the "original" DVD player, I'll get the PS2 instead. Which DVD player is better?

Thanks,
Morgan

We're not sure what you mean by "the original" DVD player, but if you mean a standard, standalone DVD player, then yes, the PS2 is just as good.

Dear PSE2,

First I'd like to say you guys have an awesome magazine. I'm a Sony fan. So I have one simple question to ask you people. What console do you think will win the CONSOLE WARS? I think its Sony , but I just wanted to know who you think will win the war.

Thanks,
Richard Avello

It's hard to say for sure, since the wars are heating up so hot with all the big announcements lately, but it's got to be clear that now there can only be one winner and that will be the gamers. Yay!

Dear PSE2,

I have 2 questions for you:

1. I heard Universal Interactive Studios, Naughty Dog and, of course, Sony, are all going to PS2. Will there be a Crash Bandicoot for PS2?
2. Will I need a different S-Video cable for PS2?

Your mag rocks!

Thanks for your time,
Steve Carbonetta

1. Anybody who is anybody is going to PS2. There will be Crash for PS2 but it won't be developed by Naughty Dog. Naughty Dog has their own super-special happiness planned for PS2 and if there is one thing that will rock for PS2, it will be what they make (does that make sense?).

2. Nope. Your old S-Video cable will work.

You rock, too.

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How Mark Got a PS2

VERY LONG VERSION

The following is a sad, blow-by-blow description of Mark Androvich's PS2 launch experience.

When I first heard about Editor-in-Chief Greg Off's adventures in Japan during the launch of PS2 (detailed in our May 2000 issue), I had mixed emotions. On the one hand, it reminded me of the time my college roommate and I camped overnight for front row seats to witness Brian Shaw lead our UCSB Gauchos to victory over then-number one ranked UNLV. On the other hand, now that I have a wife, two kids, and other responsibilities, I couldn't see myself camping out in line for a PS2. Besides, since I write game reviews and strategy guides, I figured I would have a system well in advance.

As the summer came, and the news reported a shortage, I managed to remain calm. Then I learned that not only were debug units hard to come by, and I would likely not have one soon, they wouldn't play American DVDs or boxed games anyway! I would have to get my PS2 (or not!) the hard way like everyone else! Of course, by then it was far too late to reserve a system! I was hoping that, since I've answered questions, previewed upcoming titles, and purchased way too many games from the employees of the local Target and Wal*Mart during the past few years, one of them could put a PS2 on hold for me. Not a chance! But, fortunately, I did obtain some important information. I learned that Wal*Mart planned to raffle off their systems to prevent crowds, and that Target was going to pass out claim tickets to the first 39 people in line one hour prior to opening on October 26th.

What I didn't count on was that the first person would line up at 2:00 p.m. the day before! Once the signs of a line were visible, I knew that a crowd would soon follow. Still, I didn't expect more than a handful of people to spend the night in line. At 8:00 p.m., I drove past Target to satisfy my curiosity. There were about 15-20 people in sleeping bags and lawn chairs! Someone brought a portable heater, and a group of hard-core gamers even showed up with a generator, PS One, and television set to pass the time. Knowing that I could not make it to the store until the next morning, I resigned myself to the possibility of not getting a PS2 until after Christmas.

I thought I had made my peace with the disappointment, but of course I didn't sleep well that night. Although my alarm was set for 5:00 a.m., I found myself wide awake at 3:30 and therefore decided to head on over to the store. When I arrived at 4:00, I made a quick head count (which was difficult due to the darkness and the plethora of sleeping bags). In my estimation, I was either 35th or 36th in line. Had I been 50th, I would have gladly gone back home to sleep, but since I was very close I decided to wait it out. Considering that my life generally resembles a sitcom, I fully expected to be #40-first place among those who didn't get a system.

I struck up conversations with the people in line next to me as we tried to stay warm. Everyone's mood was a mixture of hope and panic. There were rumors and misinformation. No one believed me when I told them that the store had just 39 systems. The line continued to grow as the hours wore on. One guy, just two places behind me, gave up at 5:30 or so and left for home. The guy immediately behind me moved up to be with his buddy who was 8th in line. Of course, it soon began to rain on us, but no one planned on leaving!

Finally, at 7:00a.m., we pushed the lawn chairs and sleeping bags aside and stood at attention as an employee came out with a roll of tickets. I watched the size of the roll dwindle as she approached. For a second, I thought my efforts were to be in vain. Then she handed me the precious claim ticket: #37 of 39!

That wasn't the end of it, of course. Although I had a ticket, now falling apart in the rain, I still had to race home and pick up my kids since my wife had to be at work no later than 8:00 a.m. (when the doors opened). Despite being awakened at 7:30 a.m. on a rainy morning, both children did fine. They munched on Eggo waffles and drank apple juice as I drove back to the store. My heart leaped as I noticed that my group was no longer outside — the manager had let them inside to wait! I made my way through a secondary crowd of about 25 people who mistakenly thought they could get a system after us. Fortunately, I was let inside to wait in the purchase line. At 8:40 a.m., I left Target victorious with a PS2 in hand.

Looking back, it seems foolish to have devoted so much energy to obtaining a system on launch day. I may yet get an American debug unit anyway — otherwise, who will review the PS2 billiards, bowling, and fishing games? On the other hand, I can now say that I was part of history. When the news showed the crowds and announced the shortages, my kids and I could proudly say that we were there.

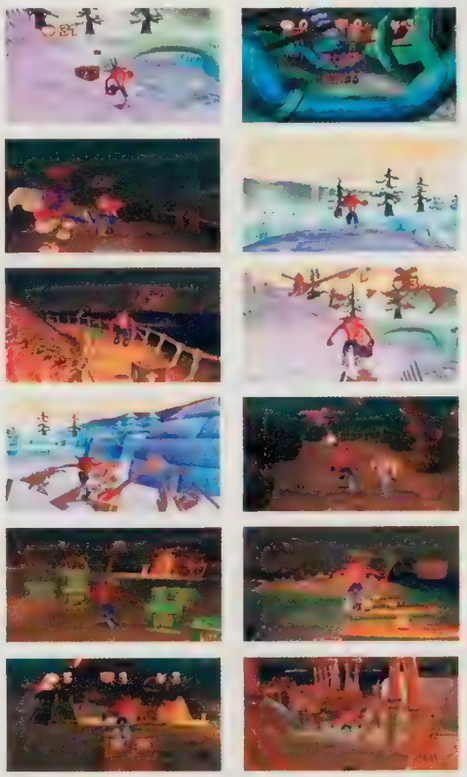
Why Mark Can't Get Another

THE LONG VERSION

SCEJ recently reported an income deficit of over $630 million for the 2nd quarter of its fiscal year, as opposed to a profit of almost $600 million during the same quarter last year. The video game division posted a 12 percent income deficit. Masayoshi Morimoto, executive managing director of Sony, commented, "Our game division [Sony Computer Entertainment] expects a deficit this fiscal year." Production problems with the PS2. According to Nikkei Electronics Online, SCE has been experiencing production problems with its Graphic Synthesizer microprocessor unit for the PlayStation2. Currently, several plants in Japan produce the 0.25µm microprocessor at a rate of 400,000 units per month. SCE recently opened a new plant in Nagasaki to produce the 0.18µm microprocessor used in the PS2 for the North American and European market. The report states that the Nagasaki plant intends to produce 1 million units every month. The plant has apparently experienced problems with the production machinery, though, and the expected number of microprocessor units produced has been decreased from 1 million to 500,000. In order for 500,000 units to be produced, SCE had to route production to other plants in Japan to meet sales projections. Costs have increased because, unlike the Nagasaki plant, the other plants produce the 0.25µm microprocessor. Each plant will now have to readjust its production lines in order to produce both sizes of microprocessor. The production of the 0.18µm microprocessor is expected to continue in the Nagasaki plant and the other plants until next quarter. Another factor that contributed to the increase in production costs is the shipment of the PS2 units to North America. Due to the delay in production, most units targeted for North America are being shipped via air freight, as opposed to shipping by sea. Apparently, this practice will continue through the end of the 2000. This is going to cost SCE more than a few beans, as they are already (by most accounts) losing $25 on every unit sold in North America! Androvich is going to be spending WAY too much time at Target over the next couple of months!

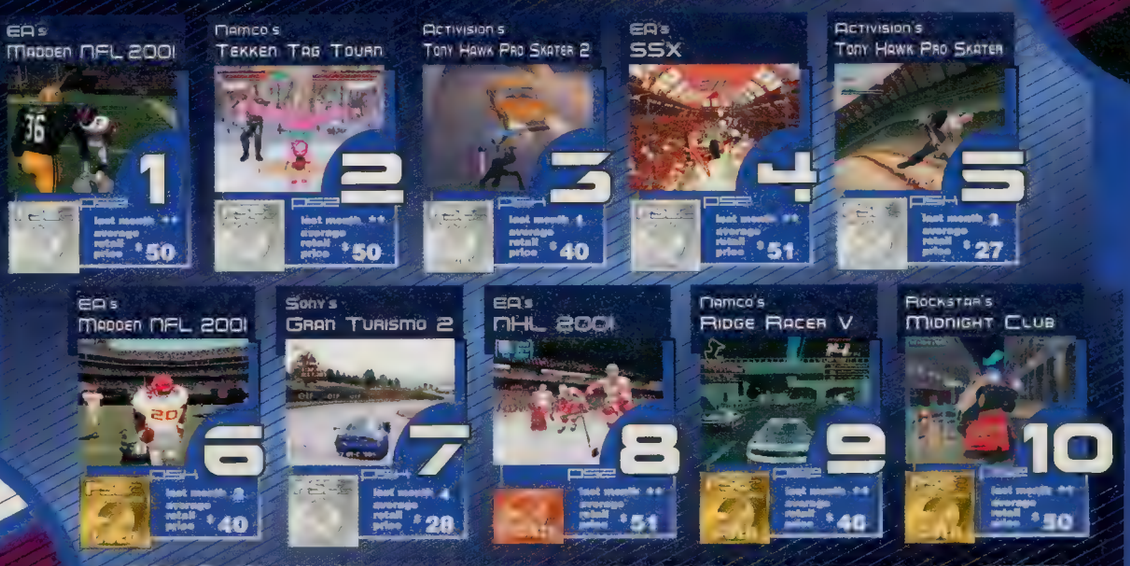
Crash on PS2?

Just as we were going to press, a short video began to circulate (from Japan, apparently) on the 'net of what is supposedly the first Crash Bandicoot on PS2, courtesy of Universal, Havas and Traveller's Tales (Toy Story 2, Toy Story, Mickeymania, etc.). While a number of magazines have jumped on this footage as the PS2 version, we remain skeptical. We do know that TT is the developer of record on CB PS2, but the footage shows absolutely nothing that distinguishes it from a PSOne game. Check out these screens and make your own decision. You have to know that there will be both PSOne and PS2 versions of the next Crash game — this footage could be of either. We'll have more for you when we can confirm.



TRST Top Selling Titles

FOR THE WEEK OF 10/22/00



** Not in Top 10 Last Month. The ratings reflected above are those of Dimension Publishing and do not represent the opinions of NPD TRSTS.
Source: NPD TRSTS Video Games Tracking Service, 900 West Shore Road, Port Washington, NY 11050 • (516) 625-2294

New for the PlayStation®2!

The critically acclaimed action game MDK™2 Armageddon is coming to the PlayStation®2 computer entertainment system. MDK™ became an instant classic with its offbeat humor and the ingenious Sniper Helmet that could shoot an enemy in the eye from a mile away. Now, picking up where the original MDK™ left off, **MDK™2: Armageddon** features a new 3D engine, advanced graphics, and new gadgets for outrageous gameplay.

Play as three different characters, each with his own unique experience:

- Sneak, snipe and shoot with the reluctant hero, Kurt Hectic, in his new Coil Suit, now with Cloaking ability, and his Sniper Helmet with Ricochet Bullets.
- Solve puzzles as the brilliant Dr. Fluke Hawkins, using wacky inventions like the atomic toaster and his fearsome alter-ego, Mr. Hyde.
- Blast enemies with four different weapons simultaneously with Max, the six-legged, jet-pack carrying, robotic dog.

MDK™2 Armageddon includes incredible new items for enhanced gameplay, more humor, and a totally new experience. Bioware, creators of the best-selling RPG Baldur's Gate™ are taking the MDK™ universe to all new levels of comic Action!

COMING SOON

MDK™2 ARMAGEDDON

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PlayStation 2

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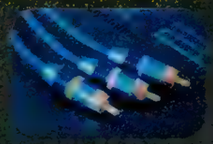
SEND US YOUR CODES AND WIN BIG PRIZES!



Each month, we'll pick out a code sent in by our loyal and intelligent readers and send that person a whole bunch of really cool stuff from MonsterCable! If you're the lucky winner, you'll get their excellent GameLink 200 AV Cable featuring nitrogen gas-injected dielectric insulator delivering maximum video signal strength for the clearest, sharpest picture possible, and the GameLink 300 S-Video AV Cable for even sharper, more crisp video then the standard composite cable, and the LightWave 100 Fiber Optic to take advantage of the PlayStation 2's Dolby Digital and DTS capabilities and lastly, the PowerStation 600 with 700 joules of surge protection to protect your baby! Wow! Those are some awesome prizes you can win for just sending in codes!

WE HAVE A WINNER!

This month's lucky winner is Sean "The Dark Jedi" Davis from Nashville, TN. Congrats!

SSX

Unlock Everything

Go to the options screen and hold down the L1, L2, R1, R2 buttons. While holding these buttons down press Down, Left, Up, Right, ✕, ○, △, □. You should hear a sound confirming correct entry. This opens up all boards, racers, and tracks. To disable this code do the same thing again.

CONTEST RULES: Anyone of any age can enter. The only people not eligible to win are employees of Dimension Publishing or Monster Cable, their friends, family, pets and anyone they talk to or know of. Dimension Publishing reserves the right to make any and all decisions regarding the contest. One winner per month will be chosen, at Dimension Publishing's discretion, based on the code or trick supplied by the entrant.

Unreal Tournament

Get the Gatling Gun from Wolfenstein

Enter this code at the title screen. Press and hold Select and then press ↑, ↑, ↓, ↓, ←, →, ←, →, □, △, □, △, and Start.

Infinite Health

Go to the main menu, then press ↑, ↓, ↑, ↓, ↑, ↓, ↑, ↓, ✕. The screen will shake if you entered the code correctly. Now start a new game and beat the first level then save. Now load your game, when you start you will have infinite health. You must have a memory card for this cheat to work.

Summoner

Hidden FMV sequence

From the main menu, Select the Credits option. Then press ✕ while the credits are being displayed.

X Squad

Get Unlimited Health

Press Start and then press and hold L1, R1, □, ○, ○, △, ✕, △, □, ←, →, ↑, ✕.

Unlock All Weapons

During any mission press and hold Select and Start and quickly press ✕, ✕, ○, ✕, ←, ↓, □.

Dead or Alive 2

Big heads

Beat the game with any character, then at the start screen, Press and hold ✕, ○, □, △, ↑. You will hear a sound if you entered the code correct

Unlimited Lives

Go the main menu, press and hold R2 then press ✕ and △ start a new game and save it then you'll have Unlimited lives.

Full option screen

Press Start during the game. then tap ✕ and △ at the same time.

Ready2Rumble 2

Box as Michael Jackson

To unlock Michael Jackson, Successfully complete arcade mode two times.

Box as G.C. Thunder

Successfully complete arcade mode three times.

Box as Freak E. Deke

To unlock Freak E. Deke, Successfully complete arcade mode.

Box as Wild "Stubby" Corley

Successfully complete arcade mode four times.

Box as Shaquille O'Neal

Successfully complete arcade mode five times.

Box as Freedom Brock

Successfully complete arcade mode six times.

Box as Rocket Samchay

Successfully complete arcade mode seven times.

Box as Robox Rese-4

Successfully complete arcade mode eight times.

Box as Mr. President

Successfully complete arcade mode nine times.

Box as The First Lady

Successfully complete arcade mode ten times.

Hidden Valentine's Day costume

To unlock a lover's costume for Lulu Valentine, set the system date to February 14.

Hidden Easter costume

To unlock a bunny costume for Mama Tua, set the system date to April 23, 2001.

Hidden Independence Day costume

To unlock an Uncle Same costume for G.C. Thunder, set the system date to July 4.

Hidden Halloween costume

To unlock a skeleton costume for J.R. Flurry, set the system date to October 31.

Hidden Baby New Year costume

To unlock a Baby New Year's costume, set the system date to January 1.

Hidden St. Patrick's Day costume

To unlock the leprechaun costume for the referee, set the system date to March 17.

Hidden Christmas costume

To unlock an elf costume for Selene Strike and a snowman costume for Rumble Man, set the system date to December 25.

Unlock Champion costumes

Successfully complete championship mode

Madden 2001

Touchdown celebrations

Press and hold one of the following button combinations immediately after scoring a touchdown to perform the touchdown celebration:

Jump spike

Press and hold L1 + ○.

Say a prayer

Press and hold L1 + △.

Spike football

Press and hold L1 + ✕.

Hip thrust

Press and hold L1 + □.

Shoulder shake

Press and hold L1 + R1.

Slam dunk

Press and hold L1 + R2.

SSX

All course hints

Enter this code at the options screen, press and hold L1 + L2 + R1 + R2 and then press ○, ✕, ○, ✕, ○, ✕, ○, ✕ to view all course hints before racing a course. You will hear a sound if you entered the code correctly.

Running man mode

Enter this code at the options screen, press and hold L1 + L2 + R1 + R2 and then press □, △, ○, ✕, □, △, ○, ✕. You will hear a sound if you entered the code correctly.

Maximum stats

Enter this code at the options screen, press and hold L1 + L2 + R1 + R2 and then press ✕, ✕, ✕, ✕, ✕, ✕, □. You will hear a sound if entered correctly.

Play as JP

Earn two gold medals in any mode.

Play as Zoe

Earn three gold medals in any mode.

Play as Hiro

Earn four gold medals in any mode.

Unlock Third costume

Successfully complete all green circle tricks.

UnlockUntracked course

Earn a medal on the Aloha Ice Jam course.

Play as Jurgen

Earn one gold medal in any mode.

Unlock Fourth costume

Successfully complete all blue square tricks.

Midnight Club

Use Dune Buggy from Smuggler's Run

Insert any memory card with a saved game file from Smuggler's Run to use the Dune Buggy..

Submit Codes

Send all codes to:
Dimension Publishing
Attention: Grand Code Vizor
1175 Chess Drive, Suite E
Foster City, CA 94404
email 'em: exmail@psextreme.com

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PlayStation 2

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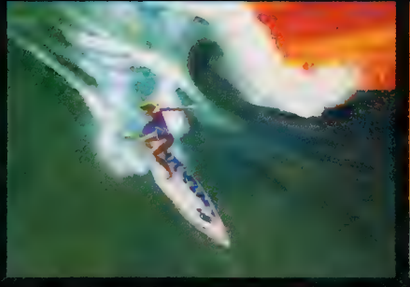
Next generation wave modeling physics

6 epic waves to master



11 playable characters each with unique abilities

Over a dozen aerial tricks can be linked for unlimited combo's!

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OPUS CORP.

RenderWare 3

ASCII

PHOTO BY TOM SERVAIS

This month, we're running a special two-page EXware section so we can take a look at the many wireless DVD remotes that are currently flooding the market for the PS2, as well as several other accessories that you may want to consider purchasing. One of these is an alternative to Sony's official 8 MB memory card — which are just about as scarce these days as the duck-billed platypus — while the other is one of the many PS2 racing wheels that we'll be testing in the months ahead. So, read on for the full report!

RX400 Racing Wheel

Manufacturer: Saitek
MSRP: $39.95

This handsome-looking racing wheel is very similar to Saitek's more expensive RX150 for the PSone — and that's definitely a good thing. Among the minor cosmetic changes that have been made are a change in color from red plastic to blue, and its action buttons are now clearly marked (before it was a guessing game).

Like its sibling, the RX400 is a decent all-around wheel that is compatible with many different racing games, including Smuggler's Run, Midnight Club, GT2, NFS: Porsche Unleashed and Driver. The pedal design is one of the best around, because they don't move around excessively as you drive, and the vibration effects are good, although not outstanding. The unit can be attached to a table with its integrated clamping mechanism, or you can use the attachable plastic base to hold it in your lap. Both ways work pretty well, although there's always a little bit of room for improvement.

Also, while the handling is generally decent, there's still no way to adjust the sensitivity, and further refinement is often needed. Plus, the steering mode switch is still in an awkward position on the back of the wheel, where it's a little hard to find.

All in all, the RX400 is a pretty good racing wheel for a relatively low price, although it's definitely not responsive enough to merit a Platinum rating. In fact, it just squeaks into our Gold category. So, serious speed demons may want to wait for Sony's new racing wheel with the release of GT3

8 MB Memory Card

Manufacturer: Mad Catz
MSRP: $29.95

Mad Catz's entry into the PS2 memory card arena is timely indeed, considering the scarcity of Sony's original 8 MB memory cards. So far, this product is the only officially licensed memory card for the PS2, and it's every bit as dependable as previous memory cards have been from Mad Catz. In other words, we've never lost any data in hundreds of saves, and we have no reason to believe that the future will be any different.

So, if you still can't find a Sony memory card, head to your nearest retailer and look for one of these babies. It's worth every penny!

DVD Basic Remote

Manufacturer: InterAct
MSRP: $14.99

This remote was the least expensive of the ones that were tested, so gamers on a budget may want to give it a look. Its lack of a pass-through feature for your PS2 controller is something to consider, but some players may not mind having to unplug the receiver to use their second controller.

The unit's lightweight, compact design is a stark contrast to the massive Mad Catz remote, but it still feels solid and well-made. The 12 function buttons are a good size and clearly labeled, but the four-way directional pad is a little on the small side, even though it is surprisingly responsive. InterAct says the infrared signal works from up to 23 feet away, and this seems to be pretty accurate.

Like the Saitek remote, this unit also has its Cancel and Enter buttons accidentally reversed, but InterAct is aware of the problem and has made arrangements to correct the situation.

All in all, this remote may be lacking in the frills department, but for a basic remote control it still does its job pretty well.

DVD/TV Master Remote

Manufacturer: InterAct
MSRP: $19.99

For an extra $5, you would expect InterAct's Master Remote to offer something more than its Basic Remote — but the truth is, there doesn't seem to be all that much difference between the two.

Both units are the same size and share similar button configurations, but neither of them offers a pass-through feature for your PS2 controller. The four-way directional pad is still small but responsive, and we also liked the fact that it can be used for volume control, which most of the other remotes lack.

The Master Remote also shares the mixed-up buttons that the Basic Remote has, but InterAct is offering to exchange faulty units with ones that have been fixed.

In order to use the remote with your TV, it must first be programmed accordingly, which some gamers may find to be a pain. When all is said and done, this remote is pretty good, but it simply isn't the best one available for the price.

DVD 2 Wireless Remote

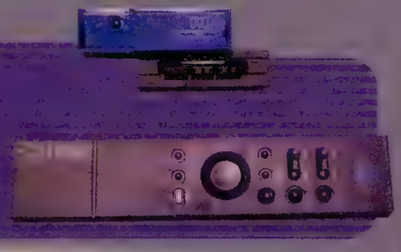
Manufacturer: Mad Catz
MSRP: $19.99

This hefty, impressive-looking remote is the largest of all the ones we tested, and it also is the only one that comes with batteries included. The receiver is black and ridged like the PS2, with a little blue lens where the signal is received. Unfortunately, Mad Catz didn't see fit to include a pass-through feature or a volume control, which would have made this the ultimate DVD remote. But the pass-through omission won't be a problem for solo gamers who typically use only one controller anyway, or players who don't mind removing a controller to watch their movies.

The DVD 2 remote is brilliantly designed in almost every other respect, right down to its comfortable rubber handgrip, which also is done in PS2 blue. Plus, the directional pad is ultra-responsive, the buttons are large and well-labeled for the most part, and they also glow in the dark! Even the battery cover is cleverly designed, opening on a little hinge that keeps it from falling off and getting lost.

As if that wasn't enough, the unit is also designed to function as a master remote that can be programmed to work with your TV and VCR, although it may be a crapshoot as to whether it actually works with your particular models.

DVD Remote



Manufacturer: Pelican
MSRP: $24.95

Slender and sleek, with ribbed edges that mimic the PS2's futuristic design, Saitek's DVD remote is extremely eye-pleasing and perfectly complements Sony's new console — right down to the blue plastic lens covering the infrared signal receiver. However, the unit's most notable feature is the well-designed "pass-through" port on the receiver, which lets you keep it plugged in at all times, without ever having to remove your PS2 controller.

The remote functions fairly well, but some of the 16 command buttons are small and sometimes hard to press with precision (especially in a darker room, like when you are watching a DVD movie). In addition, the Stop and Play buttons were accidentally switched, which has something to do with the Japanese unit having a different configuration than its American counterpart. In any case, Saitek is aware of this glitch and is correcting it.

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NASCAR Compact Wheel

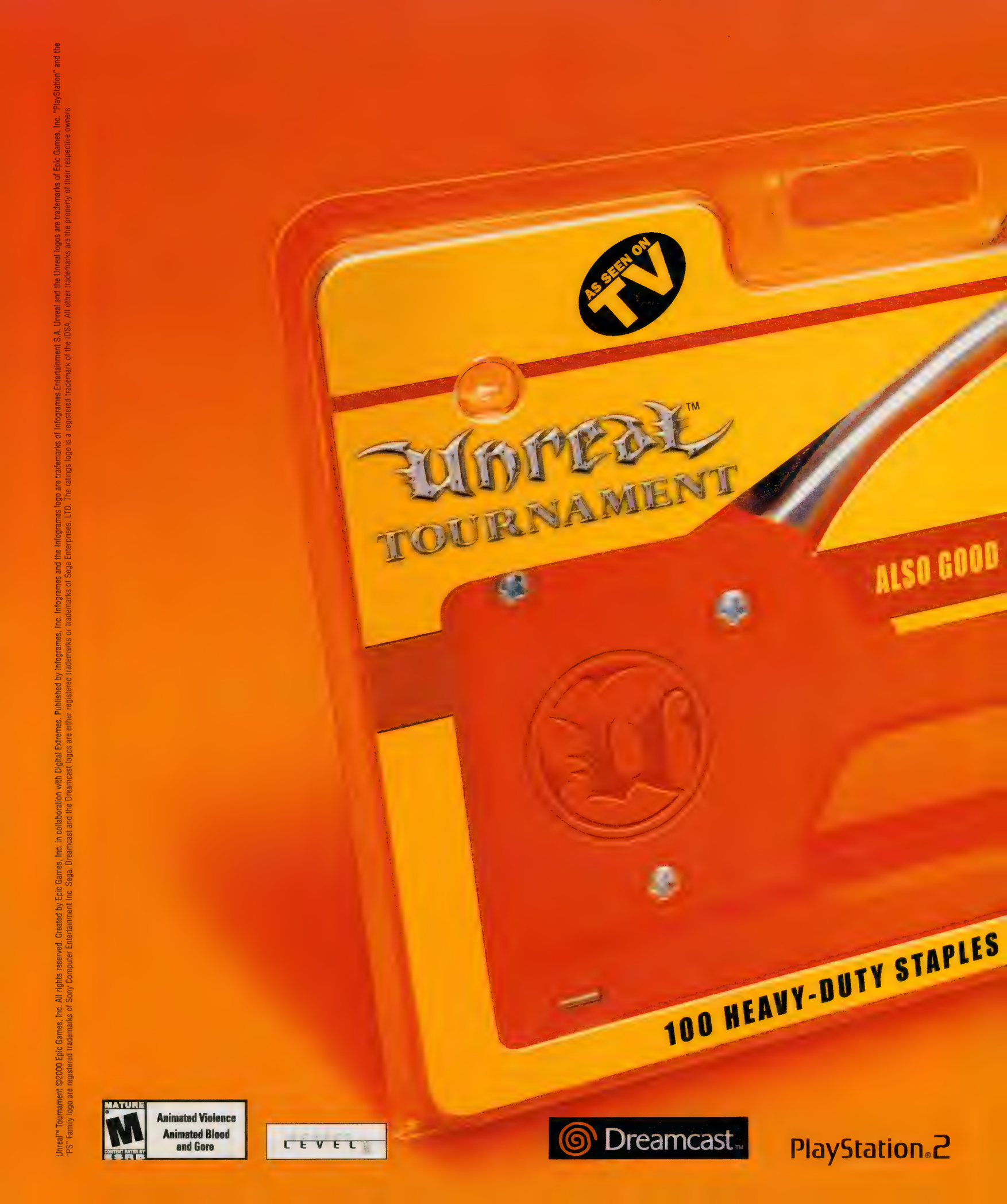
Manufacturer: Thrustmaster
MSRP: $24.99

With a price that's appropriate for gamers on a budget, this NASCAR-licensed racing wheel is best suited to children due to its diminutive size. In fact, the wheel is the smallest and lightest one we've tested, and most adults will probably find it difficult to use — especially the tiny action buttons, which are placed too close together.

Because of the wheel's angle and small base, it doesn't really sit well in your lap, and the flimsy table clamp is less than impressive. There's also no foot pedals (instead you use the analog levers to accelerate and brake) and no way to adjust the steering sensitivity, but that can perhaps be overlooked in this low price range. At least gamers can choose from three different handling modes — digital, analog and Negcon.

On the plus side, the wheel has a good turning range, works with a variety of racing games and has a fairly good feel for its miniature size. The vibration effects leave a little to be desired, but at least there's some kind of rumbling going on.

The final verdict is that we really can't recommend this wheel to most gamers, unless you happen to have an undemanding child who just likes pretending to drive. The rest of you should probably steer clear. Next month, we'll test Thrustmaster's full-sized NASCAR Shock 2 Racing wheel to see if it fares any better.



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Get up close and personal in the first-person perspective with over 10 weapons of destruction! Screenshots are from the PlayStation®2 system.

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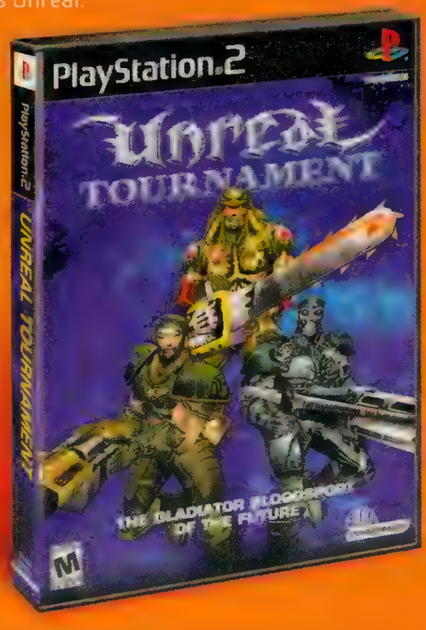


Unreal™ Tournament's fast and furious... single and multiplayer experience comes to life on PlayStation®2 computer entertainment system and Sega Dreamcast.™ Lead your team of virtual teammates against the deadliest gladiators in the galaxy. Mind-blowing realistic 3D graphics. High-octane game-play. Totally Unreal combat action. Just be sure not to lose your head.

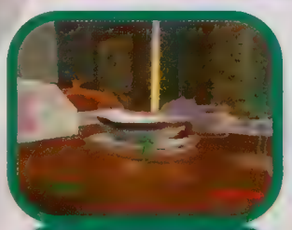
3DO AND THE "GREENING" OF PS2

The 3DO Company's "Army Men" franchise has taken a lot of heat from the video game press over the past couple of years. Of course, it has also seen quite a bit of financial success on N64, PC and PlayStation. The general feeling among the press has been that there were too many games that were un-finished and rushed to market, and that, in spite of 3DO insisting that the world of Army Men was worth expanding upon, the franchise had yet to be proven in gameplay and technology.

My feelings have always been a mixed bag. I loved the gameplay in the original "Army Men 3D" on PlayStation and really liked the expanded universe of "Sarge's Heroes" on N64 (in spite of its camera glitches). In addition, the original "Army Men: Air Attack" was a fun game but, since then, the franchise has failed to really offer anything new and the products have suffered from being rushed to market. It also seemed to be me that, while the internal development teams at 3DO had design talent, that their 3D engines and art weren't competitive with the best to be found on the host platforms. It was with this history that I made my way to FAO Schwarz in San Francisco for 3DO's preview of their 2001 lineup — dominated heavily by Army Men product.

I won't say that I was shocked by what I saw — but I was very pleasantly surprised. The presentation involved four new Army Men games, "Warriors of Might and Magic," and the two new games in their "World Destruction League" series ("Thunder Tanks" and "War Jetz"). Without exception, all four Army Men games ("Sarge's Heroes 2," "Portal Runner," "Army Men: Green Rogue" and "Army Men: Air Attack 2") were graphically exciting with fast 3D engines and detailed worlds. What follows in this feature is a game-by-game preview of what you can expect to see from these latest titles in the Army Men series, based on our hands-on time with each product and hours of interviews with the games' producers. From what we've seen and played, there is much promise in these titles, and for the 3DO Company on PS2. They have seen their future, and it is definitely GREENer (and "TANner") on the other side of Sony's technological fence.

ARMY MEN SARGE'S HEROES 2



THE SCOOP

Sarge's Heroes 2 features 17 new missions, each with a unique environment, including a Refrigerator, Pool Table, Toy Store, and the inside of a Pinball machine. The game will attempt to immerse players in the story via mission objectives with over 20 minutes of film-quality cinematic sequences. You have the ability to play as Sarge and Vikki through the story line — along the way, you can get help from the other members of Bravo Company. In addition, new power-ups allow you to make weapons more powerful or shoot at a faster rate — find a radio and call in the air strike to wipe out faraway enemies, and the addition of more toy characters to battle — including huge toy robots or elite super troopers — allows for more variety in gameplay. The game also features a 1-player mode and 3 multiplayer modes, a number of weapons, including the sniper rifle, bazooka, flamethrower and grenades and 6 different multiplayer levels with Deathmatch and Family modes. Unique to the PS2 version of the game will be features like advanced control functions that take advantage of new analog button technology, multiple camera angles to customize the field of view to player preferences, more Portals with some incredible special effects, more realistic behavior of your troops and enemies and new collision routines, camera angles and play control for a solid game feel.

MY POINT OF VIEW

Running at frame rates that consistently fall between 30 and 60 FPS, Sarge's Heroes 2 will be the first of the PS2 Army Men games to make it to retail shelves — hopefully by the end of this holiday season. Having already made an appearance on N64, SH2 will feature similar gameplay and environments, but with a level of graphic detail that is far superior to anything previously produced in the series. We were shown a level that occurs in a dining room, one that finds Sarge in a mountainous area, another on a bridge and bits and pieces of a few more of the 17 levels to be found in the game. At this point, the dining room level was the most complete (it is also the one you've seen screen shots of in previous issues). The detail in the graphics and the heightened sense of scale in this environment really brought that "next-generation" feeling home for me. There are 24 additional new games promised for PS2 between launch and the end of the year — this one is now at the top of my list.

BY DAVE WINDING

ARMY MEN AIR ATTACK™ 2

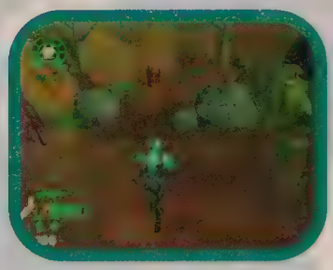
THE SCOOP

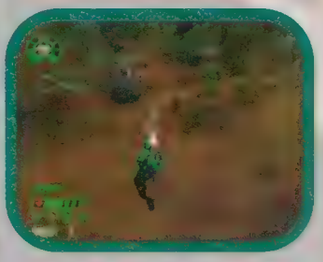
In this Army Men Air Attack sequel, Plastro, the nefarious leader of the Tan Army, has enlisted Tan Air Ace Baron Von Beige to trap Captain William Blade. Blade represents a threat to the invasion forces of the Tan Army — such a great threat that no less than General Plastro and Baron Von Beige, the evil geniuses behind the Tan war effort, scheme to bring him down. Air Attack 2 offers more Portals with awesome special effects, more realistic, less predictable enemy AI, unpredictable real-world forces — wind, gravity, fans — that affect objects with unprecedented realism, and 22 new missions through 10 unique environments, including: Halloween Night, Wild West, Flower Bed and Backyard levels. In addition, the game promises to immerse the player in the story via mission objectives, real-time cut scenes, in-game voice-overs and new cinematic sequences featuring "film-quality" animation. The game will also offer a greater degree of interaction with your copilots, Woodstock, Hooligan, Hardcore and Bombshell, via pop-up windows, a helicopter winch that is a more powerful weapon than ever — use it to whip objects at enemies and structures like a wrecking ball or throw, lift, move and drop them, more helicopters with improved physics, and different performance characteristics for each chopper type. One-Player, Cooperative and Head-to-Head play round out the basic package. Unique to the PS2 version of the game are exclusive new interior/exterior environments including Basement and Japanese Garden, multiplayer modes including Cooperative and Head-to-Head, an integration of larger world objects not previously possible, advanced control functions that take advantage of new analog button technology, and a "Procedural Virtual Terrain" creation system that produces organic environments with completely unique terrain textures — no two pieces of terrain look the same.

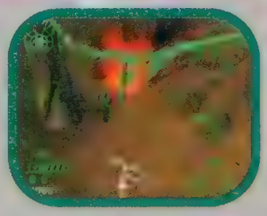
MY POINT OF VIEW

I found Air Attack 2 to be the best looking of the four games (at least at this point in time). The game engine, and all objects within it, are drawn to an incredible level of detail and are very colorful. The frame rate is always above 30 and the special effects are very cool. Fans of the series will be very pleased with AA2 and I think it will bring a lot of new players to the franchise. This game also has a shot at making it to retail before the end of the year.

ARMY MEN GREEN ROGUE







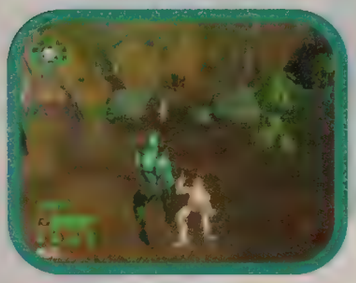
THE SCOOP!

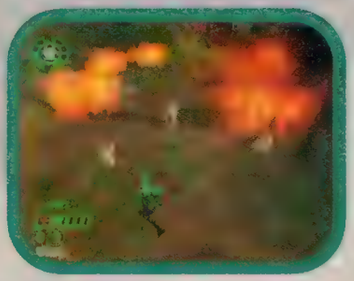
From within the G.A.A.R.D. laboratory, scientists have combined the genetic material from Sarge and his Heroes to create a biotechnology enhanced "super" soldier named Omega Soldier. Omega Soldier has been given the skills and strength to take on an entire army — however his skills will need to be tested earlier than anticipated. Can the Green Army's creation defeat the Tans once and for all?

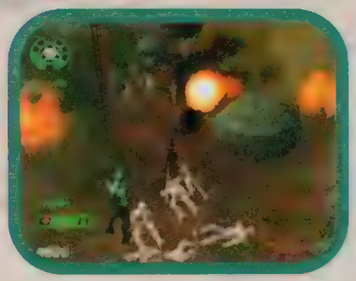
Army Men: Green Rogue is an arcade-style shooter that features a forward- scrolling, third-person perspective (camera angle above and behind). The goal is to make it through numerous combat missions against the Tan Army and defeat the toy bosses along the way. You earn points and achieve high score status and can increase your points, ribbons and medals by destroying enemies, completing levels and maintaining artillery reserves. The game allows players to move and shoot independently in all directions, and to upgrade each basic weapons 5 times (Rifle, Grenade, Bazooka and Flamethrower). In addition, the game features: special effects that include explosions, muzzle flashes, disintegrating buildings, etc., dramatic Lighting effects that create real shadows, water reflections, smoke haze and dust kick-ups (from bullets hitting), stat's that track performance throughout the game, five large toy bosses, 16 levels, three initial mission lives, with 2 possible earned continues (6 more lives), and both single player and 2 player cooperative modes.

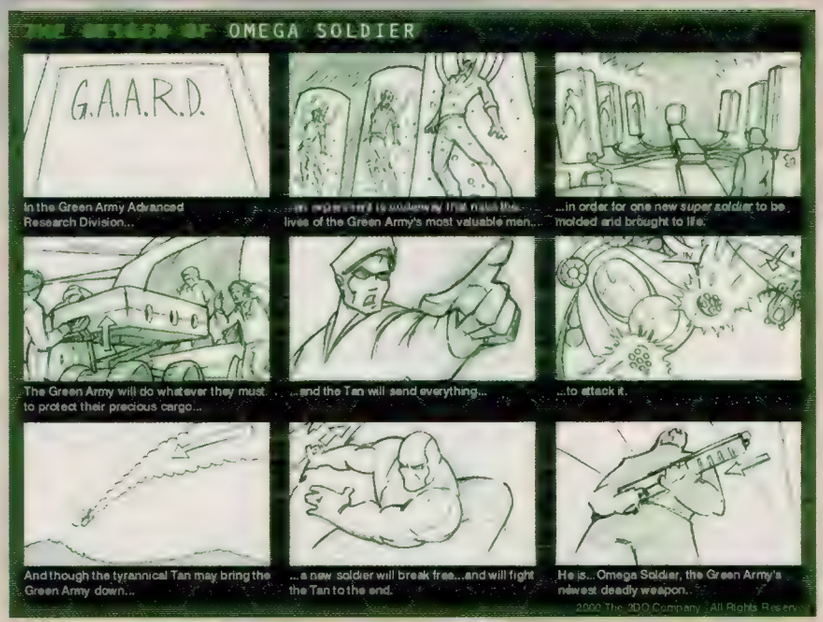
MY POINT OF VIEW

This is the game I'm not quite sold on yet. It plays a lot like a 2K version of the arcade classic, "Ikari Warriors." While the game is impressive to look at, it features a camera system and play field that are constantly scrolling forward (into the screen, directly at the player) and is built around simple, straight-ahead shooting action. While the development team plans on letting the player speed up or slow down the scrolling, it still remains to be seen whether or not this concept is deep enough for the modern player. Green Rogue is scheduled for release in the first half of 2001.








THE ORIGIN OF OMEGA SOLDIER
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In the Green Army Advanced Research Division...
...in order for one new super soldier to be molded and brought to life.
The Green Army will do whatever they must to protect their precious cargo...
...and the Tan will send everything...
...to attack it.
And though the tyrannical Tan may bring the Green Army down...
...a new soldier will break free...and will fight the Tan to the end.
He is... Omega Soldier, the Green Army's newest deadly weapon.
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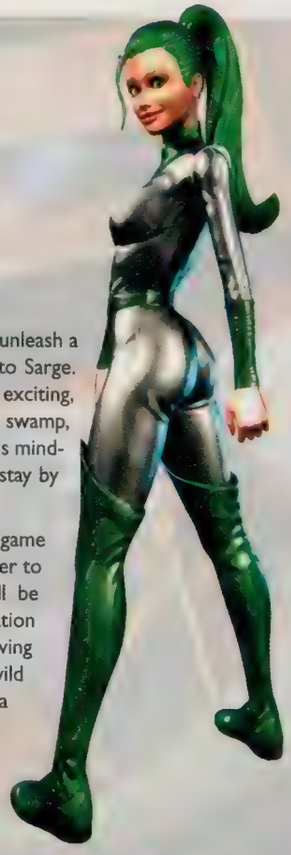
PORTAL RUNNER

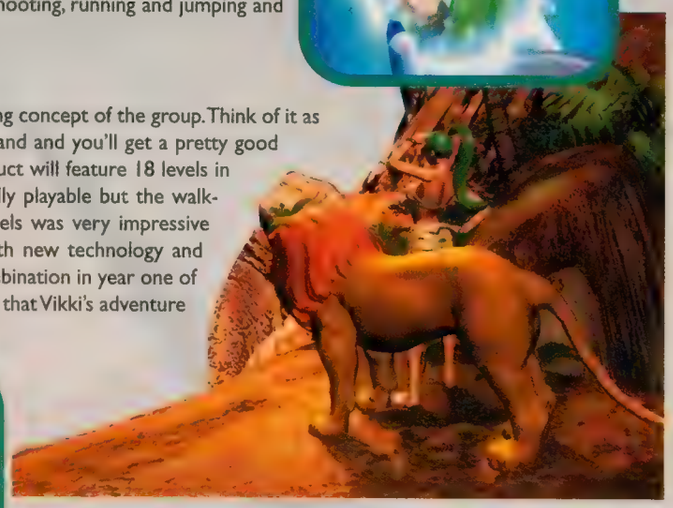


THE SCOOP!

Brigitte Blue, Vikki Grimm's arch nemesis, is about to unleash a diabolical plot to trap Vikki so that Brigitte can sink her claws into Sarge. This plot will launch Vikki on a fantastic adventure through a variety of exciting, fantastic toy worlds. Vikki will need to fight her way through a dinosaur-infested swamp, a medieval castle and an alien spaceship to save Sarge from Brigitte Blue's treacherous mind-warping spell. On the way, she will meet a cool new friend, Leo the lion, who will stay by her side to fight off the evil denizens of these new worlds.

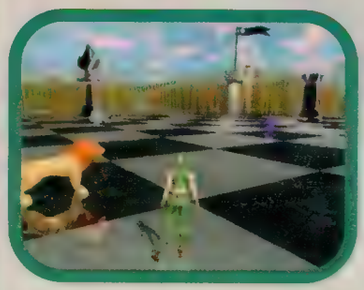
Portal Runner has been created exclusively for PS2 and features an original game engine that has been created specifically to take full advantage of the machine's power to create spectacular worlds and depict stunningly realistic characters. Players will be immersed in a world unlike anything they have seen before, thanks to the combination of PS2 technology and a surrealistic visual style. The game will feature super fast-moving riding gameplay as Vikki and Leo barrel through huge canyons to evade packs of wild creatures in hair-raising escapes, beautiful and rich fantasy environments that have a surrealistic and non-cartoony visual style, bow and arrow gameplay where the arrows will feature trails of fire or glowing waves of magic, a "Hot Shots" trick shooting system that lets Vikki solve puzzles and remove obstacles in her path, using her bow and arrow, and three ways to play the game: control Vikki, control Leo, and control Vikki riding Leo — with each mission style will have unique challenges and surprises.

In addition, Leo will feature a "Fury Meter" in gameplay. Vikki will have to keep Leo's savage instincts under control and be aware of his anger level and calm him when needed. Exciting multiplayer target shooting allows two players to configure several different target shooting game types, with a variety of game parameters to tweak. Classic moving platform puzzles add to the shooting, running and jumping and riding excitement.



MY POINT OF VIEW

Portal Runner is the most exciting concept of the group. Think of it as Tomb Raider meets Alice in Wonderland and you'll get a pretty good idea of what to expect. The end product will feature 18 levels in three different worlds. PR wasn't really playable but the walk-through we were given over two levels was very impressive and the game is going to feature both new technology and new content — which is a scarce combination in year one of PlayStation2. The folks at 3DO expect that Vikki's adventure will hit retail in Spring, 2001.



THE BUCK STOPS HERE

Trip Hawkins, the President and CEO of the 3DO Company, is a well-known industry veteran. As one of the founding fathers of Electronic Arts, it can be said that he was one of the instrumental few that helped shape the modern gaming world as we know it. He is also one of the few executives in the world of electronic gaming that is actually a GAMER! His passion for the business is so complete that he commits his own personal resources to the product that he believes in. The 3DO Company recently announced that they had secured an additional $20 million in funding for the development of their new PS2 titles over the next year or two. Of the 20 million, 15 of it came out of Trip's own pocket! While their are many executives who will act as mouthpieces for the companies that employ them, precious few have the passion for the product, and the willingness to risk their own future for what they believe in. As a small business that is owned and operated by a group of passionate gamers, those of us at Dimension Publishing have more than a little respect for what 3DO is attempting to do as they go up against much bigger competitors. It is this type of thinking and commitment that brings true innovation — always has.

CONCLUSION!

There's no question about it — the immediate future of the 3DO Company rests in the hands (paws) of Sarge, Vikki, Leo and the gang, and it's on PS2. If the games realize their potential and the manic desire for PS2s continues at its current pace, you can expect that the demand for plastic is going to go through the roof in 2001, and that non-PS2 owners will be green with envy.

Our thanks go to Mike Meyers, Laura Kirkpatrick, David Fruin (Director — Green Rogue), Erich Waas (Executive Producer — Sarge's Heroes 2), Kudo Tsunoda (Director — Air Attack 2), and John Salera (Director — Portal Runner) for their help in putting this feature together.

DAVE

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PlayStation.2

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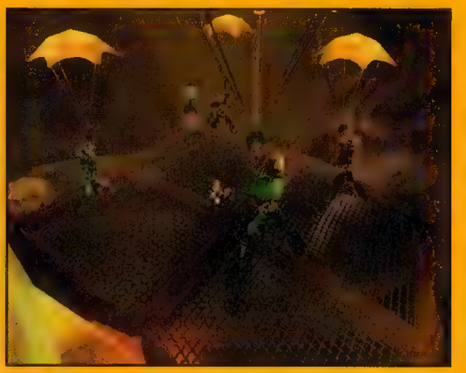

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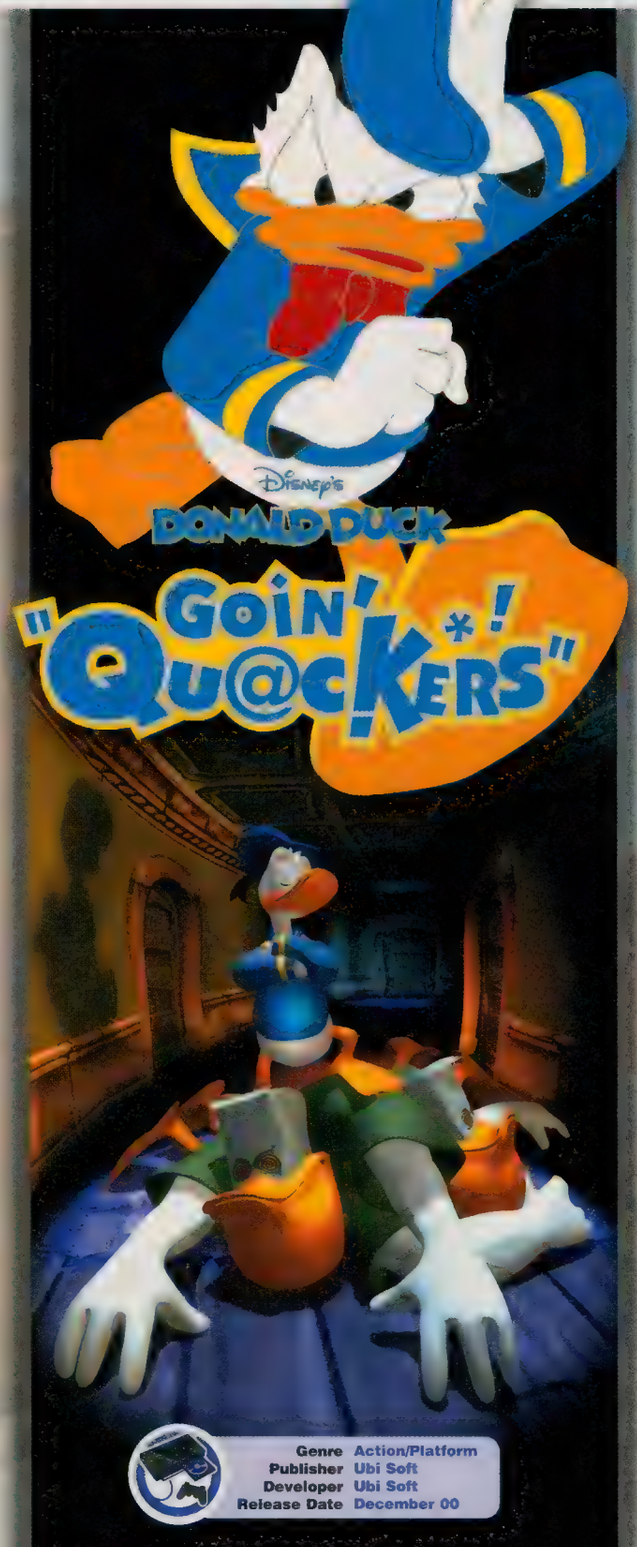
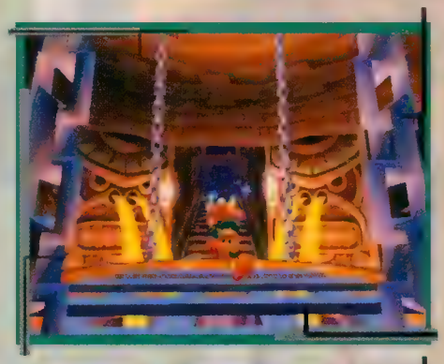
Ubi Soft has two titles for the PlayStation2 headed our way this Christmas — both character-driven 3D action platform games. The first, Rayman Revolution, is an amazing-looking hybrid of Rayman 2 (which has been released for just about every gaming platform over the last year or so, including the PC, DC, PS and N64). The second, Donald Duck: Goin' Quackers, is an all-new adventure starring Disney's most grouchy cartoon character. While there will be Dreamcast, N64 and PSOne versions of the game, the PS2 version will have its own exclusive features.

The game's storyline revolves around Donald's love of his life, Daisy Duck. Daisy, who is a world-famous reporter, is kidnapped while on special assignment to discover what danger is going on inside Merlock's ancient temple. It's up to Donald to run to her rescue and save her from Merlock's clutches before his bothersome cousin, Gladstone, gets to her first. Luckily, Donald will have the help of his nephews, Huey, Duey and Luey, as well as his friend Gadget at his side. As Donald, you'll have the ability to punch, kick and butt-bounce your way through 24-plus levels of 3D action/platforming in a beautiful yet hostile cartoon world.

Using a hybrid of the versatile Rayman 2 engine, Goin' Quakcers challenges players to revive their old-school play mechanics and run, jump and fight their way through a variety of levels that take a page directly from the Crash Bandicoot games. One of the more unique features of the game revolves around Donald's explosive temper. As you encounter enemies, take damage and pick up power-ups, Donald's mood will vary from happy to berserk, with the controls and gameplay being affected in the process. For example, if Donald takes a hit, he will go into an explosive rage, complete with the age-old cartoon representation of a cloud of smoke around him, and arms and legs flailing out from all sides. When he's in this mood, he won't be able to jump as far and is harder to control. On the other side of the coin, if Donald finds a milk shake power-up, he will become stronger and can break open certain walls and objects that conceal hidden areas in each level.





Genre	Action/Platform
Publisher	Ubi Soft
Developer	Ubi Soft
Release Date	December 00

Exclusive to the PlayStation2 version, Donald will be able to execute special moves which will give him temporary invincibility. These moves can only be executed after bouncing off the heads of three enemies in a row without touching the ground. Once accomplished, if you quickly press the R1 button before touching the ground, you will then have three seconds to execute a special button/D-pad combination. If this is done correctly, you are rewarded with a variety of humorous animation sequences where Donald will perform his version of Mexican Golf, the Soccer Chop and much more. Also exclusive to the PS2 version of the game, Donald can collect four costumes, each associated with one of four types of mini-moves that can be performed at any time during the game. These costumes are obtained by finding secret spools of threads hidden throughout each of the game's levels. Lastly, drawing upon the power of the PlayStation2, extra animations have been added, as well as a super-fast frame rate of 60 fps, and an increased polygon count, delivering an amazing-looking 3D cartoon world.

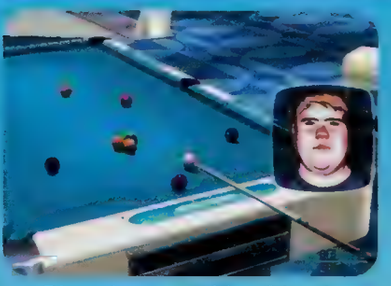
If all goes according to plan, Ubi should deliver both Rayman and Donald for the PS2 before the end of the year, filling the wide open action/platform void on the system. Look for the complete review next issue.

GREG

PlayStation 2

Q-Ball

BILLIARDS MASTER



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EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

twisted metal: BLACK

Genre	Car Combat
Publisher	Sony
Developer	Incognito
Release Date	Summer, 01

Sony did a lot of things right when they originally introduced the PlayStation to the US market back in September of '95. One of the more important and lucrative choices they made was to partner with a then little-known software developer in Salt Lake City, Utah by the name of Singletrac. Originally developing simulation software for the military, Singletrac somehow became involved in early PlayStation software development and produced more than a few lucrative franchises and classics, including Warhawk, Jet Moto and, of course, Twisted Metal. After developing the original TM, as well as the sequel (arguably the best of the bunch), Singletrac went off on their own to make games for GT Interactive and Microsoft, while their popular franchises stayed with Sony and fell into the hands of the developers down at their San Diego studios (best known for their sports titles). While the Twisted Metal series has still done exceptionally well for Sony with the last few iterations (they are currently up to four), the games haven't held up well to media scrutiny. Thankfully, this is about to change with Twisted Metal: Black, an all-new sequel heading to the PlayStation2 next Summer.

Seeing the error of their ways, Sony has gathered up the original development team (who now call themselves Incognito Studios) and are in the process of creating the ultimate Twisted Metal. Remaining true to the franchise while bringing a new look and feel to the series, Twisted Metal: Black promises to place players into a deeper and darker gameplay environment than ever before. Built upon a world laced with madness and destruction, TM: Black sets the stage for a gruesome yet electrifying battle. Calypso, the mastermind behind the Twisted Metal battles, returns once more to host the ultimate contest of wreckage and devastation. He has plucked some prime contestants straight out of an asylum and has promised these otherwise doomed souls a single wish should they defeat their opponents in a battle of twisted metal. As the carnage unfolds, you'll learn how and why these mad motorists were locked up behind the walls of insanity.

Through the technological capabilities of the PS2, TM: B features enhanced player environments with moving traffic, changing weather conditions, living pedestrians and interactive objects, making for a highly-charged, living world of destruction. Like the previous Twisted Metals, Black will feature a deep layer of strategy essential for staying alive and delivering deadly yet creative kills. Expect plenty of death-dealing weapons and a variety of hidden combo attacks at your disposal. In addition, there are going to be plenty of other features in the game, including eight one-player battlegrounds, ten deathmatch battlegrounds, a variety of game modes, four player split-screen, enhanced vehicle physics and the return of some of your TM favorites.

We had the opportunity to see the game up and running a while back and, even in its early state, it looked drop-dead amazing. We can't even express how excited we are that it's coming to the PS2 and is being developed by Singletrac alumni. Now if they would only start working on a sequel to Warhawk...

Greg

Chicks dig guys

with small cars.

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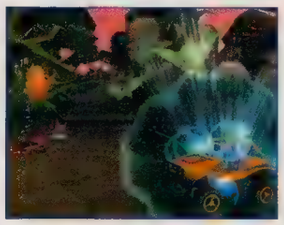
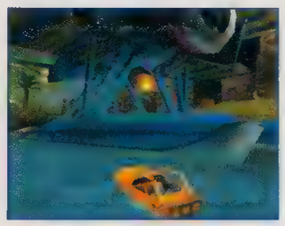


Blow away the competition with insane weapons! Shock-Wave, Bouncing Mines!

Race in movie-themed worlds! Lost Inca Temples and Pirate World!



Kick into overdrive with over 30 vehicles, including first-ever RC boats!

PlayStation.2

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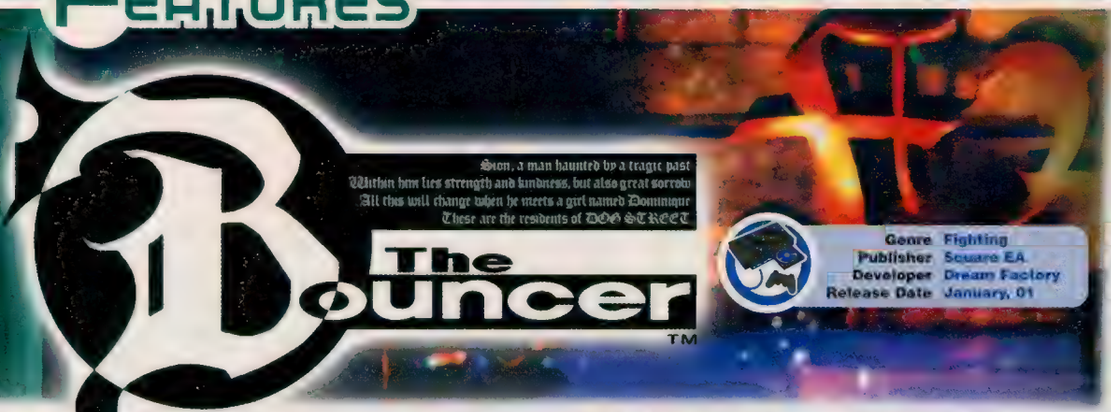
The Bouncer
TM
Sion, a man haunted by a tragic past
Within him lies strength and kindness, but also great sorrow
All this will change when he meets a girl named Dominique
These are the residents of DOG STREET
Genre Fighting
Publisher Square EA
Developer Dream Factory
Release Date January, 01

Okay, we STILL haven't seen any actual gameplay footage of The Bouncer, Squaresoft's upcoming cinematic fighting game, but we have been given the latest batch of screens depicting the action. While Square remains tight-lipped on how the game actually plays, we have been able to glean a few details. First of all, The Bouncer is being co-developed between Square and Dream Factory (the developers responsible for Tobal 1 & 2 and Ehrgeiz: God Bless the Ring). Dream Factory brings their fighting expertise to the table while Square has been able to concentrate on developing some of the most detailed and realistic character models and backgrounds ever seen in a video game. With The Bouncer, Square is intent on delivering a new type of genre dubbed "story game", where players will feel like they are interacting in a Hollywood style movie. The game features heavy cinematic direction — one of Square's strong points — and the story will play out dependent on the character you're playing as, the path you choose, and your overall success. The characters in the game have been designed by Tetsuya Nomura, best known for his work on Final Fantasy VII & VIII as well as Parasite Eve. It is said that the Final Fantasy staff also worked with the background visual team, bringing their unique design and vision to the game. Square has stated that The Bouncer pushes the graphic capabilities of the emotion engine and will deliver the most outstanding, ground breaking, high-quality visual experience yet. From the various cinemas we've been privy to, to the amazing-looking screens, it's quite possible they could deliver on that promise.

For those of you unfamiliar with the game's storyline, here's a brief recap: You play as Sion who, along with his two buddies Kou and Volt, are bouncers at a local bar named Fate. As Sion you live in a futuristic metropolis named City of Edge. City of Edge is overshadowed by the Mikado Corporation, a highly political high-tech company who is working on some very top secret operations. Dominique, a young girl you found lying in the middle of town (and someone who you've grown quite fond of), has become a mascot of sorts at the bar although nobody really knows were she comes from. For the longest time, everything has been peaceful, quiet and just a little bit boring, but that's all about to change. Dominique was kidnapped this morning right out from under your eyes by Mikado's secret service. It's now going to be up to you and your friends to rescue Dominique from Mikado's clutches and find out what's behind their sinister purpose... The Bouncers' longest night is about to begin.

Like I said earlier, there still isn't a heck of a lot to report on Square's mysterious new PS2 title. With the talent backing the game and Square's brilliant PlayStation track record, The Bouncer could prove to be one of 2001's early hits. With the amount of pleading we've been throwing Square's way, we should be able to get our hands on a playable version in time for next month's issue. Stay tuned.

GREG

PlayStation.2

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T — Teen — Animated Violence — Content Rated by ESRB

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MDK2 ARMAGEDDON

The first MDK was the inspiration and brainchild of Shiny Entertainment, the original developers of Earthworm Jim. The game, which was initially released on PC (with a PlayStation version released sometime later), introduced some very cool play mechanics, including the ability to zoom in and snipe enemies from far-off distances. It also had plenty of that Shiny trademark humor.

Sometime later, Bioware, a talented Canadian development house, was brought in to make a sequel for the PC and Dreamcast. The result, MDK2, was released earlier this year and was well-received, although there were a few complaints regarding its high difficulty level. Seeing a chance to improve and fix the game's imperfections (as well as make a few bucks in the process), Interplay and Bioware took the opportunity to bring the game — now titled MDK2: Armageddon — over to the PlayStation2 for early next year.

If you're not familiar with MDK2, then allow me give you a brief breakdown. In the game, you play as three different characters — the reluctant hero Kurt Hectic, the dangerously brilliant Dr. Fluke Hawkins, and the six-legged, jet-pack-carrying robotic dog, Max — and each brings their own unique attributes and skills to the mix. The PlayStation2 version will retain the same storyline, basic levels, environments and gameplay of MDK2, but will also offer some unique changes, features and additions that are not in the DC and PC versions.

The standard features found in both games include the ability to play as the three different characters, use an assortment of amazing gadgets and weapons (including the Black Hole Bomb and the Sniper Silencer), and play through ten vast environments. The biggest change to the game will be overall improvements to the gameplay. Bioware is dedicated to making it a fun and challenging experience, and they have taken all of the feedback from the other versions to heart with the PS2. There will also be much-needed adjustable difficulty settings and in-game hints to get players through tough spots. Another area of enhancement is the controls. Because of the PS2's award-winning Dual Shock 2 controller, Bioware has been able to provide a large number of control configurations to please just about every gamer. Some other changes include new enemy placement, re-working of level layout and designs, enhanced graphics (including light sourcing and high-res texture maps) and modified puzzles.

We are really excited about MDK2: Armageddon. The game was great on the Dreamcast and promises to be even better on the PlayStation2. As it stands right now, Interplay is looking to release the game as early as December, but don't be surprised if they take the extra time to make it perfect and hold off until early next year. Either way, it should be worth the wait.

Genre Action/Shooter
Publisher Interplay
Developer Bioware
Release Date January, 01

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EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB — Animated Violence

PlayStation

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KLONOA 2

LUNATEA'S VEIL

After Ridge Racer V, Tekken Tag Tournament and Moto GP, we were left wondering what Namco would produce next for Sony's wonderbox. Known for their excellent arcade translations, and going by their previous track record, my best bet was they would have a 128-bit Air Combat waiting in the wings. While an Air Combat sequel is more a probability than a possibility, it turns out I was wrong (heck, it's not the first time). Their next official title is actually a sequel to Klonoa, 1998's PlayStation 3D action/platform sleeper.

The original Klonoa was definitely a "gamers game," meaning that it had tons of gameplay and originality, but wasn't backed up by a big-name franchise or license (and thus not necessarily a big-seller at retail). Klonoa was infused with originality, colorful and vibrant graphics, tons of game mechanics and easy to pick up yet difficult to master gameplay. The graphic engine in the game was similar to that of Crystal Dynamics' Pandemonium, in that you were running around "on rails" in a pseudo-3D environment. The key to Klonoa's unique gameplay was the ability to pump up enemies (a la Dig Dug) and either throw them at others as a weapon, or use them to get to otherwise unreachable ledges and platforms.

The sequel, tentatively titled Klonoa 2: Lunatea's Veil, follows the continuing adventures of Klonoa (the cat-like creature from the first game). This time he's older, stronger and more daring. Taking advantage of the PS2's high-performance capabilities, Klonoa 2 will introduce and incorporate new features, effects and camera angles, while still maintaining the basic game mechanics and gameplay of the original. One example of a new feature explained to us by Namco, is the addition of scripted camera sequences. At one point in the game, Klonoa will be sliding down an icy slope while avoiding obstacles in a horizontal, side scrolling view. As he shoots out of the tip of the slope, the camera angle will automatically switch directly in front of him to provide a dynamic view from just below. As he lands, the view will switch once again to provide a 2nd-person perspective. These scripted sequences promise to add dynamic and breathtaking thrills to the game, as well as keep the player on his toes.

Like the PSOne Klonoa, the sequel is played in a similar, "2.5-D" environment, keeping the gameplay similar to those who grew up with side-scrolling action/platformers on their favorite 16-bit systems. As in the first game, basic techniques, such as jumping and attacking, will require only the use of the analog thumbstick or D-pad and two other buttons. Namco is attempting to make Klonoa 2 "player-friendly," and provide full support for both young and old-school gamers alike. As with most popular action/platform titles, if gamers get stuck they can head back out to the map and re-visit previous stages and sub-events for pick-ups or items they might have missed.

By looking at the accompanying screen shots, you can tell that Namco has put a lot of effort into the game's graphic engine. Klonoa and the other characters and objects in the game are rendered using a cell-shading technique, similar to the Dreamcast's Jet Grind Radio and Wacky Racers. As with the first Klonoa, the sequel is bursting with color and brilliant polygonal graphics, although you can expect much more detail at a much higher resolution. The game also promises to run at a consistent blistering 60 frames per second and feature smooth and detailed character animation.

As of press time, there still has been no official announcement of a US release date, but what is known is that the game is over 50% complete, will contain as many as 24 different stages, and feature familiar both new and familiar characters from the original title.

GREG

Genre	Action/Platform
Publisher	Namco
Developer	Namco
Release Date	Unknown

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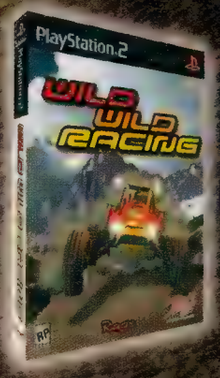

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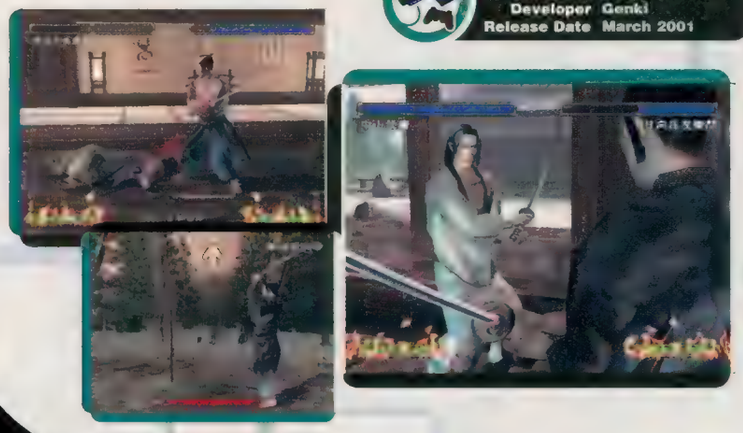
PlayStation.2

KENGO: MASTER OF BUSHIDO

Taking a page from Sqauresoft's Bushido Blade series, Crave and Japanese developers Lightweight (a division of Genki) are working on a sword-wielding martial arts sim to be ready early next year. In Kengo: Master of Bushido, you are given the daunting task of learning to master Kendo (the way of the sword). In the game you'll start out as a young apprentice, but through diligent training and persistence, you will gain skill and new techniques that will ultimately get you into the Emperor's tournament where you can challenge for the ultimate title, Master of Bushido. Unlike most fighting games, you can't just button mash to pull off moves. Besides a life meter, you also have a Ki (spirit) meter. The more you attack, the lower the meter goes. Learning to pace your blows and striking with razor-sharp accuracy, as well as finding the natural rhythm of the fight are essential to victory. Here is the list of features to be found in the final game: A variety of selectable characters with different storylines, numerous stages with highly-detailed interactive environments, dynamic environmental audio, fully customizable attack combinations, an innovative "Samurai Reputation" system based on honor and technique, and a turn-around feature that allows dying players a final, ferocious attack to attain victory.

Genre Fighting Sim
Publisher Crave
Developer Genki
Release Date March 2001



ONI

Rockstar promises to continue their dominance on the PlayStation2 into next year with Bungie's Oni, a new kind of third-person action/adventure game. The game is a unique combination of fighting, gunplay, exploration and adventure rolled into a single, intense experience. Oni tells the story of Konoko, an elite cop and one-woman SWAT team whose approach to fighting crime is a devastating combination of rational calculation and fighting fury. She is an agent of the Tech Crimes Task Force — a woman whose tough exterior hides a soul haunted by dark secrets from her past called "oni" ("ghosts" or "demons" in Japanese). Oni's gameplay promises to transport the player into the midst of an intense anime-style action thriller. Expect massive, futuristic cityscapes to explore with indoor/outdoor environments, as well as a huge variety of characters to interact with. One of Oni's most notable features is Konoko's seamless animation. Bungie has been able to develop a very robust animation engine that interpolates single frames, allowing for smooth transitions during gameplay. Some of the other features in the game include 14 huge indoor/outdoor sprawling cityscapes, and an arsenal of weapons to wield (pistols, sniper rifles, rocket launchers, etc.)

Genre Action/Adventure
Publisher Rockstar
Developer Bungie
Release Date January 2001

NBA LIVE 2001

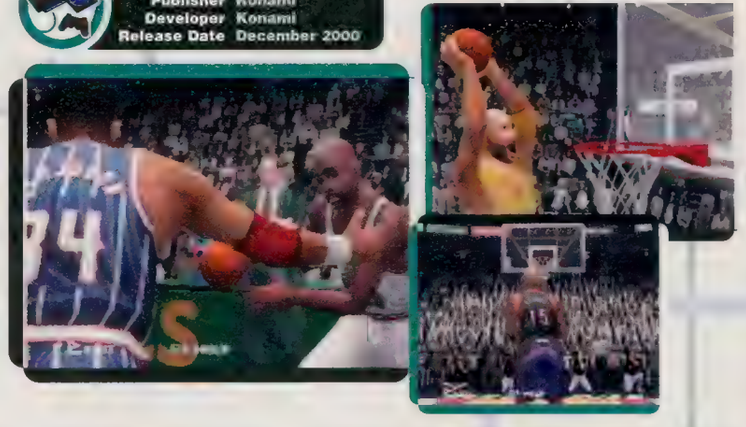
For those of you that think the NBA Live series from EA has been around forever, it actually dates back to 1994, when it first appeared on the Sega Genesis as NBA Live 95! Before that, the hoop series from EA went under the name of NBA Showdown, but that's another story. Why the history lesson? NBA Live 2001 for the PS2 marks the third generation of home game systems for the esteemed franchise. Since we haven't actually PLAYED it yet, all we have to go on are the press releases and mini video clips of gameplay sequences that we have seen. And, to give the game the benefit of the doubt, it's too early to say one way or another! Certainly, all of the standard features will be "in there" — big dunks, lots of animations and voice overs, multiple gameplay modes, etc. But, what we really want to know is, will it be a completely new game, or just rehashed PSX code with improved graphics? Will the AI routines be written specifically for the PS2? EA isn't saying, so we'll have to wait and draw our own conclusions when we get hands on (probably reviewable) for the next issue of PSE2. Don't touch that dial!

Genre Sports
Publisher EA Sports
Developer EA Canada
Release Date December 2000

ESPN NBA 2NIGHT

Update #2. Our first hands-on preview of Konami's new PS2 hoops game revealed a fine-looking example of roundball. The player models were all incredibly detailed, with each character utilizing 10x the number of polys that their PSX (In the Zone) players had. The players are all scaled to the appropriate height and weight, and you really get a great appreciation for what a player like John Stockton has to deal with when he drives to the basket! Much like NFL2K had set the standard for what a football game should look like, Sega's NBA2K did the same for basketball. Well, PS2 owners and hoop fans will be happy to discover that the Dreamcast game is no longer the best looking game around. The arenas are reproduced to exacting detail, and the floors are soooo shiny, they look like glass. At the time of our meeting, the gameplay was still being tweaked, as not all of the animations were in — causing some unnatural things to occur! However, the animations that were implemented were working very smoothly, and the game played at an even 30 fps. Stay tuned for more info next time!

Genre Sports
Publisher Konami
Developer Konami
Release Date December 2000



Metal Gear Solid 2

Konami's Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty is still quite a ways off (a least a year by most accounts), but every so often a few screens trickle in for us to show our readers. This latest batch reveals the very cool box feature that was such a hit in the PlayStation Metal Gear. As you can see, Snake can still get inside and hide in boxes, as well as pick them up and walk around while inside. What you can't see, is that the boxes will actually take on wear and tear, and will get more and more ratty as you use them. One screen shot (not shown) shows the box all warped and buckled from water exposure — how's that for reality!? The other screens show that Snake will once again have to figure out how to expose infra-red trip lasers, most likely with cigarettes, and more firefights between him and the enemy. Unfortunately, there isn't much else in the way of news or new information on the game, except that it's more than possible a playable demo will ship on the US and Japanese releases of Zone of Enders early next year. As usual, as soon as we get more info, screens and artwork on this ground-breaking game, you will see it in these pages.

Genre Action/Stealth
Publisher Konami
Developer Konami
Release Date Summer 2001

TD Off Road: Wide Open

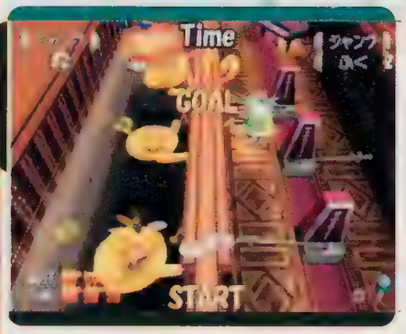
There's no arguing Angel Studios has quickly become one of the premiere developers on the PlayStation2. With Rockstar's Midnight Club and Smuggler's Run just out the door, they are already well under way with their next title, Test Drive Off Road: Wide Open, for Infogrames. Like Smuggler's Run, Wide Open will feature vast off-road environments to drive around in, except this game game is all about intense racing against the competition. Setting the stage as the three real-world locations in the game are Moab Utah, Yosemite, California and the Big Island of Hawaii. Chosen for their diversity in textures and environments, as well as their reputations for extreme off-road racing, these three locations will be the backdrop for an intensely expansive racing experience. Within each of the game's three locations, there will be eight-to-ten tracks, including circuit courses and A-to-B races. While there will be checkpoints to go through, you will be able to chart your own course through the rough terrain. Wide Open will feature a variety of licensed off-road vehicles, including the AM General Humvee and Hummer, Jeep Wrangler, Ford F150 and Bronco, Dodge Ram, and the Shelby Durango. As evidenced from their first efforts, it's pretty much a given that Wide Open will be a pure blast to play.

Genre Racing
Publisher Infogrames
Developer Angel Studios
Release Date Summer 2001

Kuri Kuri Mix

Here's an interesting and unique title from the makers of King's Field and Armored Core. Kuri Kuri Mix (definitely a working title), is a game you would expect from a developer such as Art Dink, as it is quirky, as well as completely original and unique in its concept and execution. The game revolves around two bunny rabbits by the names of Cookie and Cream who are charged with bringing the Moon back to the evening skies. It seems the Moon forgot its responsibilities and left for a mysterious island — at least that's what the Great Chicken told you. Now it's up to you and your partner to team up and bring the Moon back home. Kuri Kuri Mix consists of two game modes, Story and Vs. In the Story mode, you will have the challenge of controlling both bunnies on screen simultaneously. This can be done in a variety of control schemes, from using each analog thumbsitck for each character as a one player game, to turning the DualShock vertically and teaming up with a partner — one person using one side of the controller and the second person using the other. Of course, you can set it up so two people can play with two sperate controllers as well. The game is time-based and you will have to use each bunny to figure out a variety of puzzles so the other can continue forward.

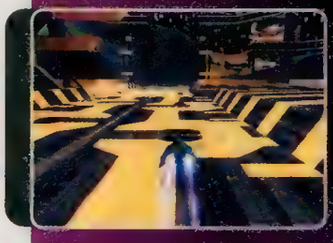
Genre Action/Puzzle
Publisher Agetec
Developer From Software
Release Date February 2001

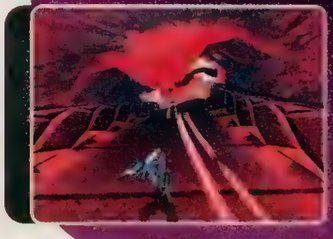


Wipeout Fusion

Okay, we're guilty of previewing Sony's upcoming futuristic racer, Wipeout Fusion, more than a few times in the pages of PSE2/PSExtreme during the last six months, but everytime we receive new shots, we just have to show them. While there still haven't been any official announcements from the Sony camp, we have been able to glean that it is running with all of the racers on-screen at a steady 60 frames per second. Very cool indeed. For those of you who haven't read about Fusion's features, allow us to give you the breakdown: The PS2 sequel to the popular franchise promises to take the game a massive step forward, with the addition of completely new gameplay features, tracks, ships, weapons and game modes. Developed by Studio Liverpool (the original Wipeout and Wipeout XL team), Wipeout Fusion will apply a whole new physics set to the anti-gravity vehicles, giving the player the ability to race upside down or at any angle they choose. Additionally, players won't be restricted to the track and will frequently have make their own paths in order to take first place. Opponent AI has been enhanced as well, and no longer just run on a pre-set path. Expect rivals to zone in on you and attempt to take you out.

Genre Racing
Publisher Sony
Developer Studio Liverpool
Release Date March 2001





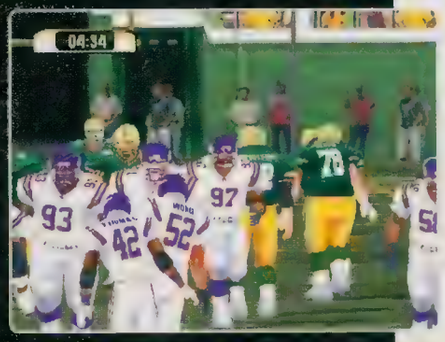
NFL GameDay 2001

By Eric Winding

EVERYONE — CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Genre	Sports
Publisher	989 Studios
Developer	Red Zone
Origin	USA
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	Now

It's hard to imagine publishing a football game for the PS2 on the heels of Madden. To say that Madden helped sell hardware is an understatement. To say that this version of GameDay would make people return the hardware may be a stretch, but not that much! In my 6+ years of reviewing games, I can honestly say that I've never been as shocked or disappointed in a game as I am with NFL GameDay 2001 for the PS2.



First of all, this ain't the GameDay that we've come to know and love on the PSX. The quick responses and fast gameplay features have been replaced by arbitrary input recognition and plodding character movements. These players barely react to your input commands, and they rarely recognize other players. You can try to stiff-arm a defender or juke a DB, but the majority of the time, the CPU doesn't realize you've attempted a move, and you'll be treated accordingly. Make a dive for the guy with the ball, further than 2 feet away, and you'll fall harmlessly to the ground. Or, worse yet, you'll half-way touch the guy, but have zero effect on the dude.

The AI is as defunct as any I've ever come across. Throw the ball to a RB in the flat while a CPU defender stands there and watches, then turns his head to see you continue to run up field. I've seen a safety turn and run 30 yards up field AFTER I've pitched the ball to my FB, who proceeds to run for 30-40 yards. I've seen groups of defenders turn and run in the OPPOSITE direction of where the play was taking place. I've seen the CPU take the ball and spike it into the ground like it was trying to stop the clock, ON THE FIRST PLAY OF THE THIRD QUARTER. I've seen the the CPU RB juke himself into a small gain, when if it had run straight ahead it would have gained 20 yards. My favorite, though? I hurled a 35-yard completion to the 2-yard line. In disgust, the CPU defender kicks the ball out of my hands as I lay on the ground. The ball sails through the air as Dick Emberg calls out "IT'S GOOD"! Huh? The next thing I know I'm kicking off and the score reflects that I've just scored a field goal!? I didn't know whether to laugh or cry! Oh — this happened in the SUPERBOWL. Call me crazy, but I actually played an entire season of GameDay 2001, which is probably 18 3/4 games more than any other reviewer on the planet, I can assure you!

As you can see, the look of GameDay leaves a lot to the imagination. Nobody in their right mind could confuse this with Madden, although they may be surprised to find out the game doesn't work in their PSX. The colors are all washed out, the player detail is minimal, and the sound hasn't been enhanced to take advantage of the system. Of course, I can think of few things in this game that do. NFL GameDay does have some nice tackle animations, but on the whole, most of the animations appear to be missing some frames.

GameDay 2001 has none of the "extras" that Madden has except for a draft mode. Other than that, forget about it. Shoot, there isn't even a practice option! During the course of the season, there are weekly MVPs and updates on the Pro Bowl selections, but the MVP system is totally out of whack. Guys would get the reward for having 105 yards on 30 carries with 1 TD, while my QB had 400 yards passing, 5 TDs, 28/33 passing, and no INTs. Or my RB would have 172 yards on 21 carries with 3 TDs, but he would lose out to a QB with 171 yards, 1 TD, and 21/37 completions. Gimmie a break! After compiling other-worldly stats, my QB would lose the season MVP to a RB with 1,500 yards and 5 TDs. My QB threw FIFTY TDs! Things like this further proclaim the game's complete lack of intelligence. There's no reward for suffering through the season, so why bother?

Bottom Line

In the end, NFL GameDay 2001 stands out as the harbinger to every product that was forced to ship early, long before it should have. In fact, it probably would have been better if GameDay just sat this season out!

Score: 70%

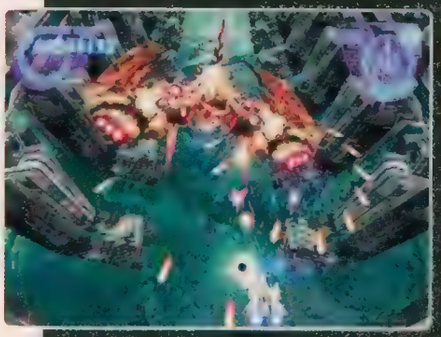
Bronze

Compatibility 1 or 2 Players

SILPHEED

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

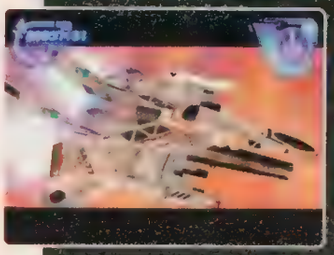
BY GREG OFF



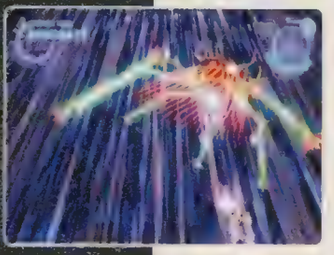
Working Designs is one of those publishers that have made their money by appealing to the hardcore gamer. Seeking out niche import titles and Japanese RPGs and then localizing them for the American market has been their bread and butter for many, many years (starting way back with NEC's TG 16), and they are continuing the trend with the PlayStation2. Their first title, Gun Griffon Blaze, shipped at launch and was very well received within the hallowed walls of Dimension Publishing (we gave it a Gold score of 93% last issue). The second, Silpheed: The Lost Planet, should be on store shelves by the time you are reading this.

Genre	Shooter
Publisher	Working Designs
Developer	Game Arts/Treasure
Origin	Japan
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	Now!

Many of you might remember the original Silpheed, which appeared on the Sega CD way back in 1993 (actually, for those of you keeping track, Silpheed originally appeared even further back (in 1988 to be exact), as a DOS and MSX-based product in Japan). For its time, the Sega CD version showed off some fancy polygon-based graphics. The game was pseudo 3D, meaning that, for the most part, you weren't interacting with the polygonal backgrounds (which were really just pretty FMV). You could move your ship forward and backward into and out of the screen, and left and right, but like most shooters during that time period, your ship was "on rails", and always moving forward. At its core, Silpheed adhered to the tried and true shooter formula that has been around since the days of Space Invaders and Galaga — shoot at wave after wave of baddies that come swooping down at you and avoid their fire at any cost.

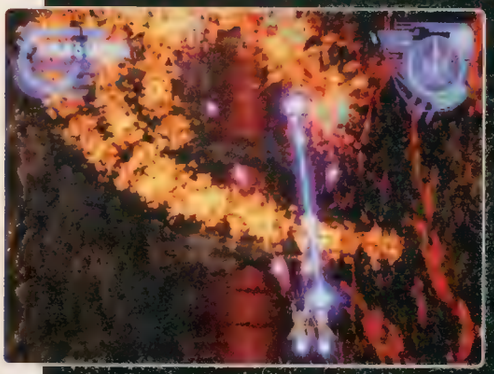


Well, here we are almost eight years later, and a sequel of sorts is on its way for the PlayStation2. Originally thought to be a remake of the original, it turns out Silpheed: The Lost Planet is really just a brand new game with only the name and theme in common. There is a backstory to the game, which is played out via some very beautiful CG cinemas, as well as detailed mission briefing information screens before heading into battle, but all you really need to know is to shoot at everything in sight.

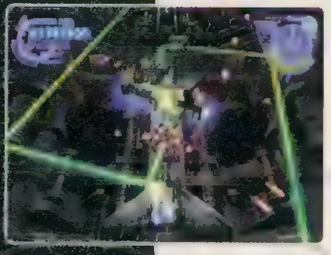


One of the more interesting facets about Silpheed for PS2 is that it was programmed and designed by both Gamearts (developers of the original) and Treasure. Originally consisting of a group of ex-Konami employees, Treasure is well known in both in Japan and the States for bringing us such great and unique titles as Gunstar Heroes and Dynamite Heddy for the Genesis and Radiant Silvergun for the Saturn and PS, and Bangio for the N64 and Dreamcast (among others). Treasure typically delivers new and innovative gameplay ideas with their titles, although they chose to stick with a very basic shooter design with Silpheed. In fact, there are no power-ups to grab and no screen-wiping nuclear smart bombs to drop in the game whatsoever — two staples in the shooting community. Instead, you will get the ability to "refuel" once or twice during a level, giving you replenished health and the ability to switch out your weapons.

The weapons system is the most unique aspect about Silpheed. As you successfully complete each level, you are typically given two new weapons which get permanently added to your arsenal. Your ship has the ability to equip any two from your stable — one on each side of your ship — adding an element of strategy to the game. Some weapons, like the V Vulcan, only shoot out in a diagonal pattern, leaving your front exposed, whereas others, such as the Optic Lasers, shoot straight ahead directly in front of you. Finding the right combination for each level is key, and unless you're a shooter god, you'll be replaying the later levels quite a bit. Thankfully, Working Designs left in the unlimited continue option from the Japanese version, as beating the game with only three continues would be next to impossible.

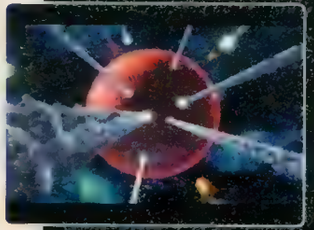


Speaking of the differences between the import and US releases of Silpheed, the good people at Working Designs have once again put together a quality localization. Unfortunately, they didn't have a lot of time to make any great changes (they picked up both Gun Griffon and Silpheed late in the game). They were able to lessen the slowdown to next to nothing, add analog control, and re-write and record quality English translations to the CG and information screens.



As far as the graphic look and feel of the game, Silpheed is a beautiful sight to behold. Each level is very detailed and has some fantastic scenery to quickly take in while you're shooting aliens and avoiding fire. And, as far as bosses go, Silpheed wins the award for the coolest and nastiest around. The music soundtrack is adequate and there is continuous banter going on between you and your other Silpheed team members that really puts you in the heat of battle.

BOTTOM LINE



Here's the basic review in a nutshell: Silpheed has great graphics, sound and music, and quality shooting gameplay. If you are a fan of shooters, then you'll enjoy Silpheed very much. The challenge level is high, and while there is not much available in the way of replayability, it is a very fun ride while it lasts. While the game won't be for everyone, it will delight those who either have a loving fondness for Treasure and Gamearts or who love the shooting genre in general.

SCORE: 90%

PSE2 GOLD

COMPATIBILITY 1 Player

BY ERIC WINDING

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

READY 2 RUMBLE: ROUND 2

Genre	Sports
Publisher	Midway
Developer	Midway
Origin	USA
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	Now

Ready 2 Rumble: Round 2 is a launch title that probably got less attention and less positive press than the other dozen plus titles that were available when you first picked up your PS2. The reason (s)? It's an arcade game, and people are less likely to be interested in a sequel to an arcade-style game than they are to just about anything else (just look at how the interest in all the subsequent NFL Blitz games has waned so heavily after the first game was declared such a mammoth success). Secondly, although the game looks great, the other versions of R2R (on all other systems) also look terrific, so no HUGE graphic improvement was perceptible. The attitude was "Yeah, it's Ready 2 Rumble — move on". It's the latter of these two beliefs that I take issue with, because once you sit down to play the game for an extended period of time, you'll realize just how much HAS been added to make the game PS2 noteworthy.

What makes a game like R2R draw you in, and then keep you interested, is the colorful boxers. Without them, the game is just another bland fighting game. Back by popular demand are ten of the original fighters, including Afro Thunder, Selene Strike, Butcher Brown, and a bunch of other whacky characters that created an affable air to the original game. New for Round 2 are Mama Tua, G.C. Thunder (Afro's cousin & Prince/Little Richard wanna-be), Freke E. Deke, Freedom Brock ("Duuuuude"), and a bunch of other zany boxers. You have your choice of 12 boxers in the beginning, and can earn an additional 12 by winning them in the Arcade and Championship modes. In an odd, but fascinating, occurrence, the story goes that Michael Jackson, the gloved-one himself, got in contact with Midway after playing R2R. Seems Michael, just a 42-year-old kid at heart, wanted to know if Midway would make his likeness a character in the next game. Next thing you know, Mike's in the game, and even provided his own motion capture and voice-overs for his character! Pretty impressive, especially when you consider that Midway didn't hype up his inclusion at all. Other bonus figures in R2R2 include Shaquile O'Neal (aka Shaq Daddy, Shaq Diesel, Shaq-Fu), and impeached soon-to-be former president Bill Clinton. Heck, Midway even got Hilary in there, too, so you can now act out scenes of the Clintons that are usually only heard from behind closed doors at the White House. Sweet!

The characters, both the new and old, are all highly detailed and have a polish to them that shows off their arcade nature. The outfits and animations are all player specific, with some of them being down right funny (Freedom Brock and Freak E. Deke, especially). The one thing that I don't care for, though, is the fact that all of the female characters have "Lara Croft" type bodies — does every female need to have bouncing breasts? Anyway, the third variable that would make the arcade-style characters appear larger than life is found in the voice-over phrases. However, although each and every one of them have a few things to say, I would have preferred even more variety. When a game relies on replay value as much as R2R2 does, you really need to keep the environments fresh, and tons of voice phrases would help accomplish this task. As it is, each boxer says about 3-4 different phrases ("Whaddya think? I was gonna order a pizza?").

As far as gameplay, Ready 2 Rumble: Round 2 plays almost exactly like the original, with single punch attacks working in the beginning and combo and special punches being required to beat the harder characters. The mini-games (where you gain strength, stamina, etc.) are mostly the same, but they're still pretty fun. There's now three levels of "rumble flurries" (instead of the previous one). Once you reach the third level (and completely spell "rumble"), you can knock your opponent out of the ring and win by instant K.O. This is a fun and easy way to end a fight in the early stages of Championship or Arcade mode, but you won't be able to pull it off past the 7th or 6th ranked fighter.

BOTTOM LINE

Ready 2 Rumble: Round 2 is a fun and challenging arcade game, and thanks to the new party modes, it is even more enjoyable for multiplayer games. However, if you've played R2R on any of the other systems, don't expect any vast or dramatic changes. What you see is what you get!

SCORE: 86%

SILVER

COMPATIBILITY 1 or 2 Players

Dead or Alive 2 Hardcore

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

BY GREG OFF

Genre	Fighting
Publisher	Tecmo
Developer	Team Ninja
Origin	Japan
Format	DVD
# of Discs	1
Available	Now!

Unbelievably, Team Ninja, the internal development group over at Tecmo in Japan, went back to the drawing board after the Japanese release of Dead or Alive 2 on the PlayStation2 earlier this year. Taking advantage of the four-to-five months between the Japanese and US launches, they went back into the code and were able to make some major improvements to what was an already amazing fighting game. The new US version, titled DOA2: Hardcore, is host to a variety of new features and options, which include twice as many costumes, new stages, localized voices, two new hidden characters, new moves and even an updated graphic engine that addresses and fixes the anti-aliasing issues found in the import.

The original Dead or Alive was actually a Sega Model 2 arcade game, which was inspired by Sega's own Virtua Fighter series. The catch to Dead or Alive was that it added special danger zones, and its fighters were... how should I say... "well endowed". The game went from the arcade to the Sega Saturn and, eventually, to the PlayStation, where it gained popularity among hardcore fighters. The sequel adds plenty of new features to the mix, including a great counter system, tag-team battles, full 3D movement, the ability to break out of arenas, and intuitive controls. I'll cover this more in just a bit.

DOA2 is comprised of a variety of the standard game modes found in most fighters, which range from Story, Versus and Training, to Survival and Tag-Team. The Story mode consists of one round fights, and basically attempts to give you background on the characters and their motivation for fighting before each round starts. One of the additions to the US version is the inclusion of English voiceovers. Like most voiceover in video games, the acting is laughable and ends up leaning on the goofy/cheesy side. Tecmo decided to go back into the game and record new voice for the in-game cutscenes, but thankfully, they left the Japanese voices in as well, with the option to choose between the two. For me, the meat and potatoes of the game is the Tag-Team mode, which pits teams of two against each other. Like Tekken Tag Tournament and Street Fighter EX3, you can "tag" out and switch between your fighters during a battle. You can also execute some very cool special tag moves and unleash major damage on your opponents. Unlike Tekken Tag and Street Fighter, DOA2's tag-team battles go down to the last man, resulting in some very cool one-on-two fights.

The control in DOA2 goes pretty deep. While it's possible to get through the game with just a few moves (or even button mashing), there is plenty of depth there if you want it. All of the prerequisite fighting moves are here, including throws, juggles and counters. The counter system is particularly intuitive, and if you get your timing right you can pull of some pretty impressive reversals.

Another very cool feature of DOA2 not found in any other fighting game is the ability to knock your opponent through an arena wall or obstruction and out into another area of the environment. It's entirely possible to knock an enemy off a roof, down five stories to the ground below, and pick up the fight where you left off — very cool and very impressive. DOA2's graphics are simply brilliant. Team Ninja really re-worked the engine from the bottom up. Everything — from the environments and character models to the animation and lighting effects — appears the best we've seen on the PS2. Special emphasis has been placed on the character models themselves, who are now as smooth as a baby's bottom (with the jaggy edges being completely eliminated via software anti-aliasing). The game consistently runs at 60 frames per second, and the animation of the fighters is absolutely perfect. Of course, it wouldn't be a Dead or Alive game if there weren't a plethora of bouncing breasts — and DOA2 delivers big time. On the other side of the coin, the sound effects and in-game music ranges from inspired to absurd. The music is mostly a collection of generic guitar licks and, as I mentioned before, the English speech showcases some of the worst voice work I've ever heard in a video game.

As you well know, there were three 3D fighting games available at launch, leaving gamers a tough choice to make if they can only afford one. While I personally like Tekken Tag's control and characters a bit better, you won't necessarily go wrong if you decide to give DOA2 a shot. There are so many cool things about this fighter that it definitely gives Tekken a run for its money.

Bottom Line

Like Tekken Tag Tournament, Tecmo has produced an amazing fighting game for the PS2 right out of the gate. Even if you own the Dreamcast version of Dead or Alive 2, the PS2 Hardcore adds so many new features, options and overall improvements, it's almost a completely new game. I would definitely recommend DOA2: Hardcore to anyone who is a fan of the series or is a fighting game junkie, as there is plenty of deep gameplay, a host of secret goodies to unlock, and some great multi-player tag-team battles to be had. Check it out, you won't be disappointed.

Score: 95%

PSE2 Gold

Compatibility

1 or 2 Players

Multi Tap Adaptable 1–4 Players

Vibration Function Compatible

BY ERIC WINDING

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

NASCAR 2001

Genre	Racing
Publisher	Electronic Arts
Developer	Electronic Arts
Origin	USA
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	Now

NASCAR 2001 is factual proof as to why we do reviews. After all, the game looked good, as far as we could tell given the screen shots we received from EA, in our earlier previews. You figure the title would have the same gameplay as the PSX versions, and combined with the added graphic "oomph" of the PS2, the game would be relatively decent. Again, this is why we do reviews — NASCAR 2001 fails to live up to it's earlier hype.

Before we list the myriad of faults found in NASCAR 2001, take a look at some of the options and features. 34 drivers make their way into the game, although only 20 race at a time (2 more than in the PSX). You got your Pettys, Waltrips, Labontes, Earnhardts and everybody named Dale. A dozen tracks, including Daytona, Lowe's, Martinsville, Bristol, Indy, and Watkins Glen. Season mode can be customized to your liking — Full, Half, Custom, or Track Pack (4 predetermined races). You can choose to race in a percentage of the laps (5%, 10%, etc), and in "simulation" or "arcade" modes.

Although not as heavily flawed as NFL GameDay 2001, EA's attempt at putting out a product before it is ready for "prime-time" is none-the-less apparent. NASCAR 2001 should not have been released until 2001, at the earliest. First of all, the frame rate is so poor at times that it makes you wonder if your PS2 broke. The "game" shrieks and shudders if too many cars are on screen at the same time (4? 5?), and if you try and use the rear view mirror — oh the horror! Of course, things are at an all-time worse when you drive in the cockpit view with the rear view mirror enabled. Not only does the frame rate crawl, it actually causes everything to kind of bubble over, like you're watching the events unfold on a Bobble-Head TV. To get the sense of my analogy, try reading this sentence while you cross your eyes and shake your head rapidly up & down, side to side. That's it! You get the idea!

Next up is the graphics. Sure, the cars DO look great, and they take on multiple points of damage that further establish their cool factor. Heck, car parts even go flying all over the track after collisions. The problem is, the car models seem to be the only area of the graphics that have been improved over the PSX versions. In all other aspects, NASCAR 2001 actually takes a backseat to its PS1 counterparts. The tracks, of which there are 12, are all vanilla (Ice Ice Baby). There's absolutely nothing interesting about any of them (except Indy), and the horizons (blue sky, orange sky) are so blurry they look like textures stolen from a N64 game. What happened to "photo-realistic"? God save the Queen if this is the best the PS2 can do. Wait — we've already seen Midnight Club and RR5 — we KNOW it can be done better.

Despite the fact that there are "arcade & simulation" modes, neither of them are arcade nor simulation. The arcade mode doesn't make for spectacular crashes and anything else resembling an arcade racing game. It simply lets you go faster than the CPU cars, and makes it a bit easier to control the car. The simulation mode really isn't sim like, as you can try for an hour to destroy your car, and nothing will happen. However, bump into the wall a few times during a race, and BOOM! Your engine will blow. There's nothing to configure on your car — no tires to select, no shocks to adjust, no gear ratios to mess with — nuttin'! There's but 3 all-inclusive "setups" that simply effect the handling, speed, and acceleration. Not very "sim-like", if you ask me.

There are a few redeeming qualities about the game, however. The AI has been programmed to force you to use some strategy out there, as you simply can't speed by or push and shove the other cars out of the way. For the most part, the only way you're going to get around anybody is to draft off somebody until you have enough juice to go by them. The other nice part of NASCAR 2001 is the smoking tires and flying car parts. That's about it.

BOTTOM LINE

NASCAR 2001 will only appeal to those of you that just want to race around Daytona in a car with the M&M guys on it. If you're a REAL video game enthusiast (like probably all who have paid $300 for a PS2 are), there are much better examples of racing games to be found — on any system!

SCORE: 70%

BRONZE

COMPATIBILITY 1 or 2 Players

UNREAL TOURNAMENT

MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

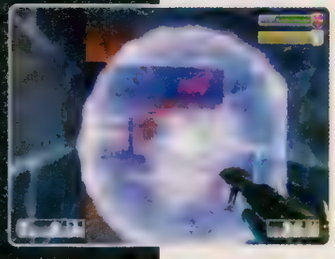
BY GARY STRASSBERG

Genre	Action/Shooter
Publisher	Infogrames
Developer	Epic Games
Origin	US
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	Now!

PS2 owners who are looking for a fast and furious frag-fest to satisfy their itchy trigger fingers would be wise to give Unreal Tournament a shot. Ported over from the incredibly popular PC version, the game has a lot going for it — even though it falls a little short of the original's greatness.

For those of you who don't already know, Unreal Tournament is billed as "the gladiator bloodsport of the future," in which players shoot it out against their friends or computer-controlled "bots" in a variety of beautifully rendered arenas. The PS2 version offers more than 50 maps where you can do battle, including many from the PC game, as well as some that have been redesigned or are totally new for the PS2. Some of the locations include Egyptian tombs, speeding trains, a pirate ship, space stations and other cool environments. The bots are also pretty impressive, boasting some convincing AI that often makes them behave like human opponents.

In addition, the arsenal of destructive weapons at your disposal is enough to make any warmonger go ballistic, including the mighty Rocket Launcher, Flak Cannon, Shredder, Sniper Rifle and Redeemer. There are 10 weapons in all, and each has an alternate way to fire it that keeps things interesting as you progress through the tournament on your way to becoming Grand Master. There are four game modes set up as ladder-style competitions, where you must climb your way to the top of the heap. These include the ever-popular Deathmatch, Domination, Capture the Flag and Assault, which can be enjoyed by one to four players (the latter via a PS2 multitap). The split-screen multiplayer modes are pretty fast, but it would have been nice to give players the option of choosing between a vertical or horizontal division in two-player mode. Still, it's a great way to blow off steam with your buddies!



In Deathmatch mode, the gameplay is simple — blast anything that moves, because the basic law of survival is kill or be killed. Domination puts you on a team that must take over and defend certain control points against a rival team. Capture the Flag is a similar team competition in which you must steal the enemy's banner, while they attempt to do the same to you. And Assault lets you lead a team as you attack an enemy outpost.

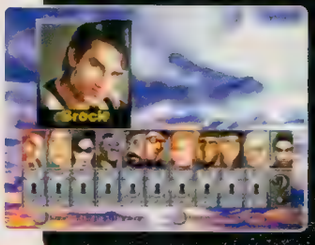
In the single-player game, there are four different skill levels ranging from Novice to Inhuman, and each is appropriately difficult. Newbies should have little trouble conquering the Novice setting, but even hardcore warriors will be seriously challenged to beat the Inhuman level. While strategy does play a role (such as knowing which weapons to use in different situations and familiarizing yourself with the level layout), the emphasis is clearly on fast-paced action.

In the beginning, players start off with 11 different male and female "skins" (characters) to choose from, and many others can be unlocked as you progress through the game. The high-polygon character models look great, although there's not quite as much detail as in the PC version. The impressive visuals are also bolstered by incredible weapons effects, superb level designs, atmospheric lighting, convincing renditions of water and lava, and a lot more eye candy for gamers to gawk at. However, the textures aren't quite as sharp as the PC version, and the resolution is still limited by your TV. Plus, the pretty graphics are sometimes marred by some troublesome slowdown when the action gets really intense, but otherwise, things generally run fairly smoothly.

A lot of gamers were concerned that Unreal Tournament wouldn't be as much fun to play on a console because of the controls, but rest assured that Epic has done everything possible to make the controls responsive and user-friendly. Players can choose from 10 different configurations using the Dual Shock 2, and you can also adjust the vertical and horizontal sensitivity, which is a very thoughtful feature. It takes about half an hour to get used to the control setup, but once you do, you'll be fraggin' bots with the best of them! Better yet, hardcore FPS vets can even plug in a USB mouse and keyboard to replicate the PC controls, which is widely considered the best setup for this type of game.

When all is finally said and done, UT is plenty of fun for one — and even better when playing against your chums. The lack of online play will surely irk some gamers who are familiar with the PC version, but those of you who have an extra TV and a friend with a PS2 can also use an i.Link cable for a thrilling multiplayer experience. Any way you play it, there's still enough action, depth and replayability to recommend this title for serious fans of action and shooting games.

BOTTOM LINE



Gamers looking for some mindless mayhem should definitely give Unreal Tournament a try. The frame rate isn't as fast as TimeSplitters and there's no token story, but the graphics are sweet, the action is exciting and there are lots of cool levels to unlock. Control is good with the Dual Shock 2, and the traditional keyboard-and-mouse setup is also supported for hardcore FPS fans. Online play would have been the icing on the cake, but the multiplayer modes are still plenty of fun.

SCORE: 93%

PSE2 EDITOR'S CHOICE GOLD

COMPATIBILITY

1 or 2 Players

Multi Tap Adaptable 1-4 Players

Kessen

By Gary Strassberg

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Genre	Real-Time Strat
Publisher	Electronic Arts
Developer	Koei
Origin	Japan
Format	DVD
# of Discs	1
Available	Now!

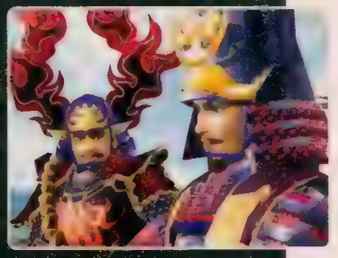
In a launch that was loaded with sequels, one of the most original PS2 titles turns out to be Kessen, a real-time strategy game that puts players in control of a huge army during the greatest battle in Japanese history.

Set in the end of the 16th Century, Kessen was designed to play like a movie that you can control, and its many cinematic sequences and beautifully rendered cut-scenes are truly something to behold. Unfortunately, the story is a little hard to follow, the battles unfold too slowly to keep casual gamers and action fans entertained, and the gameplay gets repetitive after you've tested your mettle in combat time and time again.

On the other hand, if you happen to be a patient gamer, a Japanese history buff, or someone who seriously enjoys a strategic challenge, then Kessen has a whole lot to offer. Its complexity begins to become clear as soon as you immerse yourself in the lengthy Tutorial, which explains the controls and the gameplay essentials. Players who are easily intimidated may not get any further than this, but those who stick with it will eventually be rewarded with their first glorious glimpse of battle.

The battle screen shows a scaled-down view of the battlefield, including troop positions and variations in terrain. Your forces (the eastern army) are shown in blue, while your western enemies are shown in red. The left and right thumbsticks can be used to adjust the camera position, angle and zoom, and you can quickly switch between your different units using the shoulder buttons. The battle screen is where you issue all of your orders, and then the game engine takes over as you watch the results of your life-or-death decisions unfold up-close and personal. Once you issue your commands, the fighting is out of your hands.

However, that's not to say that you don't have quite a variety of tactics at your disposal. In fact, the decisions you make are crucial to the outcome of the battle, which is largely based on the number of casualties each side sustains. In order for your troops to be the most effective, you must carefully manage their morale and zeal. You can rally your troops to increase their zeal, and order them to hold their position to let them rest and recover morale. Your officers also can duel with enemy officers, and the outcome will raise or lower your troops' zeal.



Whenever a unit's zeal exceeds 80, that force can exercise a variety of special maneuvers, including Charges and Raids on horseback, Volleys of arrows, Barrages of bullets, powerful Cannonade attacks, impenetrable Spear Walls, and much more. You also can Pursue and decimate fleeing enemies, or order an entire Army Attack to try and tilt the odds back in your favor.

All of the information you need to make smart decisions can be accessed via simple menus, and there's even a Game Dictionary that explains important terms, shows family charts, lists the full names of the Japanese officers, and provides other helpful information. The control interface is well-organized and pretty easy to learn with a bit of practice, but some players may still feel overwhelmed at times, especially when you have to act fast in the heat of battle.

Visually, Kessen is something of a mixed bag. For the most part, the graphics are pretty spectacular — especially the beautifully detailed and extremely colorful character models. The cinematic sequences are also exceptional, especially when you see hundreds or even thousands of soldiers fighting at once. Still, there are a few shortcomings. The most notable one is the bland-looking terrain, which is awash in soft, dull textures. There's also a slight shimmering that you sometimes notice, but these issues really don't detract too much from the overall experience.

Otherwise, the music is suitably dramatic, the sound effects during battle are superb and the voice acting is also convincing — but your officers' remarks do become repetitive after a while. Even more of a concern is that the gameplay also becomes repetitive, especially when you see the same battle sequences (as amazing as they are) over and over again. Even the cool cannonade attack gets monotonous when you've seen it for the umpteenth time, and there's no way to skip the lengthy attack sequences. The gameplay also could have been better if the terrain played more of a role in the combat. As it is, the lay of the land doesn't seem to make any difference.

Bottom Line

Kessen comes across kind of like a cinematic Japanese history lesson, and some players — especially casual gamers — will find it pretty hard to get into. Still, Koei deserves kudos for trying something new and showcasing the power of the PS2. The game's stunning characters and spectacular cut-scenes are simply breathtaking, and the battle scenes unfold in epic fashion. RTS buffs will enjoy the gameplay, but it will definitely seem slow and repetitive to action fans and many others.

Score: 84%

Silver

Compatibility

1 Player

Vibration Function Compatible

World Destruction League
Thunder Tanks

EVERYONE — CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

By Eric Winding

Genre	Tank Combat
Publisher	3DO
Developer	3DO
Origin	USA
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	Now!

A few years back, the 3DO Company released an arcade-style blast-a-thon for the Nintendo 64 called Battletanks (a sequel followed about a year later). The game was a lower-level hit, due mainly to its multiplayer options and good-old-fashioned gameplay. The graphics, on the other hand, left a lot to be desired.

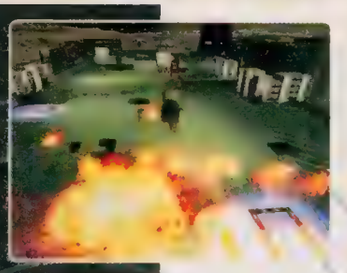
World Destruction League, or WDL, uses the same premise as Battletanks (tanks with big guns and power-ups), but attempts to wrap the entire story around a futuristic "sports" league, featuring loud announcers and over-the-top personalities (a la the WWF or RollerJam). The game delivers in some areas, but is noticeably lacking in others.

WDL, unlike the majority of other games out there, is equally at home in a one-player environment or a multiplayer atmosphere. The primary single-player mode is called Tournament, and it consists of 20+ different scenarios that offer different challenges and obstacles. The main stipulation, however, is that once you have chosen your tank (from a selection of a dozen or so), that will be the tank you have to use for the entire tournament. Even though some levels may be better suited for quicker tanks or more heavily armored ones, you'll have to make due with your original selection.

Before the start of each event, you'll be given the instructions (Last One Standing, Return 5 Flags, etc.) that will determine the winner. In the beginning stages, it's you versus a single CPU opponent, although the CPU has many tank drones out and about. As you progress, you'll encounter additional WDL players and their accompanying drones. Much like Battletanks, the gameplay in WDL is what it's all about, and to that end, the numerous power-ups are key. Special weapons like the Nano-Wall, Guided Missile, Satellite Strike, Death Blossom, and Nuke, all add the extra touch that makes the game so appealing. The special effects that each of these power-ups offer are pretty cool, and the Satellite Strike has to be seen to be fully appreciated!

There's an additional playing perspective (obtained by holding down the L2 button) that gives a top-down view of the playfield, allowing you to see much more of the action (and where it is taking place). This vantage point provides an added element of strategy to the game, as you are now able to plan out your attack route in advance. Of course, the main third-person view behind the tank still works great most of the time, but it is nice to have the added perspective.

Although you can get through the Tournament mode (on the Easy difficulty setting) in fairly short manner, the real strength to the shelf-life of WDL can be found in its various multiplayer game modes. Death Match, Frenzy, Capture the Flag, Family, and Domination are all loaded with hours of terrific mayhem for up to four players (requiring the multi-tap). In these modes, you can set the parameters (number of kills or flags to be retrieved), and then go at it with unlimited lives. Some of the games can last "forever," because you'll end up getting destroyed after you've stolen the flag, but BEFORE you return it to your home base. This process makes for a great game of cat-and-mouse (and an easy way to grab multiple flags with one shot). It's very enjoyable!



Graphically, World Destruction League is a mixed bag of nuts. The buildings and tanks are kind of simple — not a lot of color or detail to be found. The tanks don't appear to be as "bold" as the vehicles found in other games (RR5, Midnight Club). The special effects, on the other hand, are absolutely terrific, and certainly make up for the lack of interesting arenas. Also, it should be mentioned that the between-stage cinematics, featuring the two co-hosts, are laugh-out-loud funny — very clever! The rest of the sound effects are equally impressive, with all of your senses being bombarded thanks to the Dolby DTS. If you haven't set your PS2 up to an appropriate stereo system, now's the time!

Bottom Line

WDL hits the mark for gameplay, and the multiplayer contests are worth the price of admission by themselves. The game may not be up to par graphically, and suffers from an occasional bout of slow-down, but the overall package is worth a look. Grab some friends and have a blast!

Score: 87%

SILVER

Compatibility

1 or 2 Players

Multi Tap Adaptable 1-4 Players

ESPN Winter X Games Snowboarding

By Darien Allen

EVERYONE — CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Genre	Sports
Publisher	Konami
Developer	Konami
Origin	Japan
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	Now!

SSX has attracted a lot of attention, and rightfully so: it's a colorful, flashy, over-the-top take on the snowboarding experience. As great as SSX is, though, it's not a true snowboarding sim — and there are a lot of snowboarding fans out there looking for a serious taste of next generation snowboarding. Enter Konami and it's ESPN-licensed Winter X Games Snowboarding title.

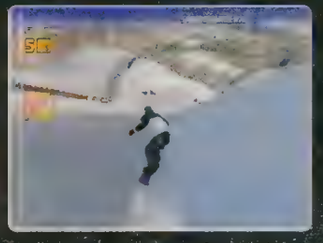
X Games have always had a certain "attitude," and Konami has done its best to instill that in this title. They have licensed 15 professional snowboarders and recreated them in their full polygonal glory. But, it's not just about the contestants, it's also about the gear. Clothing licenses, outfit licensing, equipment and sponsor licensing demonstrate that a lot of work has been done in an attempt to give X Games as realistic a look and feel as possible.

X-Games' Modes are fairly standard business. The first, X Games mode, allows you to participate in a variety of individual contests, which include downhill racing, pipe contests, slalom and "Big Air" jump competitions. Session mode contains multi-player action from two-player split screen to three-to-five player turn-based competition. Snowboarder mode is the main game mode. It allows you to create your own individualized snowboarder, compete in a variety of competitions, participate in film shoots, or snowboard for leisure. Winnings from these events can be used towards gear and equipment. Get to the top, in terms of reputation, and you could find yourself participating in the X Games. In this mode, you get to choose from a few male and female character models, pick head/body gear, board, bindings, and feet position and then, from there, you enter what can only be described as an incredibly out of place RPG-like setting. Your character is reduced to a stick-like figure that then walks around interacting with other characters. This is actually the main section of Snowboarder mode. From here you can find out your current standings, converse with fellow snowboarders, buy/upgrade equipment, purchase lift tickets, enter competitions, and attempt to earn money by participating in film shootings. The competitions are standard point-based X games snowboarding competitions, with the addition of being able to view AI opponents' runs in the turn-based competitions as well as view incredibly detailed replays. Film shootings are a bit different — from Cliff, Park, Road and Town jumping, you'll find yourself on a hill, just you and your board. The idea here is to simply be flashy for the camera. Once you've completed the course, the film will be reviewed with points granted based on your expertise at showing your stuff.

With ESPN adding their input and experience, Konami has done a very good job of recreating the X Games experience. Authentic broadcast camera angles and sweeping course previews with sponsor flags hanging on various portions of the track show that they've done their homework. The player models are some of the best you'll find on any title, with lifelike movements and facial expressions, character clothes that realistically flap in the wind, no character joint seams, and animation combined with high-quality motion-capture work that is almost always smooth. The actual courses are a bit sparse, but they often are in real-life (X Games uses the authentic courses featured in the 2001 competition). If there is a problem with course design, it's that the backgrounds are extremely pedestrian, containing little to no motion and generic detailing. This isn't to say that the backgrounds are poorly created, but clearly the focus was the actual riders and their animation.

X Games doesn't feature much in terms of sound. On a high point, it contains several licensed alternative music tracks, but there's no commentary present — just the oooh's and awwwwwhhh's of the trackside fans and the sounds of your board cutting through the snow.

Winter X Games lands SQUARELY in the sim department in terms of control. Though it features a system similar to those in titles like Tony Hawk and SSX, the way your character actually interacts with his environment is a bit different. Seemingly a minor difference, there is a separate button for carving (turning using weight shifting and without skidding). The problem here is that without carving you quickly lose speed (more so than I've seen in any previous snowboarding title). Losing speed is bad, and in many of the competitions it's hard to regain that speed (especially the pipes), so you're left frustrated and looking for the reset button. Another low point is the recovery time from tricks. Past snowboarding titles have been pretty forgiving when it comes riding rails and landing from stunts. Not so in X Games. Landing from tricks and riding the rails requires you to really be on your Ps and Qs — whether you are using the digital or the analog pad. The actual trick system is very similar to that used in many other titles. Once you've come to grips with the tricky control, you'll find a title with a large amount of replayability.



Bottom Line

X Games is a solid title, but it's not for everyone. It features a learning curve a bit steeper and less forgiving than other titles, but combines excellent character graphics and animation, and authentic X Games track representations. Looking for a realistic snowboarding sim? Look no further than Winter X Games.

Score: 86%

Silver

Compatibility 1-6 Players

ESPN INT'L TRACK & FIELD

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

BY ERIC WINDING

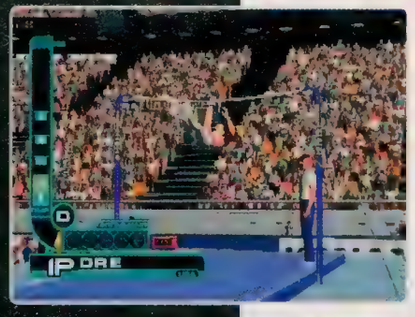
Genre	Sports
Publisher	Konami
Developer	Konami
Origin	Japan
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	Now

Konami is more excited about the release of the PS2 than most game publishers. Why is that, you ask? Simple. If their last Track & Field game (ITF 2000) was the best they had going, then hard times for KOA (Konami of America) were just around the corner! The game was simplistic, looked just like a five-year-old T&F product, and lacked any hint of excitement. With the release of the PS2, Konami shipped out ESPN International Track & Field, and the game is doing quite well. Why is that? The game may look great, but it is basically the same type of gameplay that could be found in all previous versions. Apparently, as if most game publishers didn't already know this, good looking games will sell at launch, with little to no attention being placed on the gameplay.

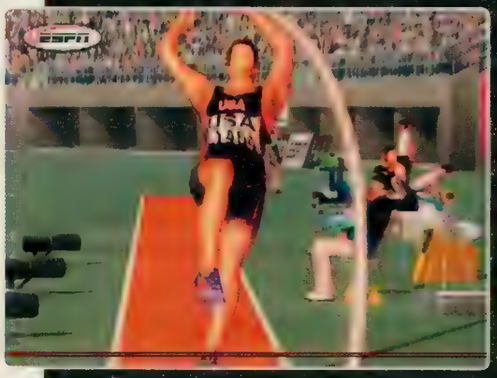
That, of course, is where we come in! The editors at PSE2 have, and always will, have more concern for substance over style — gameplay over graphics. That being stated, I will throw a curve at you — I REALLY like this game, even if it doesn't make a single use of the ESPN license (outside of the logo). Yes, the game is still simplistic in nature, but the events are diverse enough to keep it interesting, and the multiplayer factor cannot be overlooked!

Like all of the other Track & Fields before it, this ESPN branded version features two gameplay modes — Trial & Championship. In Trial mode, you can select any one of the ten events and have at it. There's a brief tutorial before each event, although for some of them, they help not at all. Fortunately, you'll get the hang of the more difficult events after just a few attempts. Once you feel comfortable in all of the different events, you can choose to enter into the Championship mode, where you'll compete in all of the events (in random order). Graphically, Konami tried to break up the events over the course of "three days", alluding to some sort of Olympic atmosphere. The fact is, there's no Olympic license, and any sense of your being a decathlete or whatnot is lost as you become male for some events, females for others, and your nationality changes as well! This does beg the question then — Why are you the 100M Dash guy at the end of the ceremony? Why not the swimmer chick or the Trap Shooting dude? Doesn't make any sense. And, it brings up another point: why no create-a-player?

Anyway, as far as being a solitary gaming experience, that's about the extent of it. You can, however, unlock some behind the scenes motion capture video of different athletes for winning medals, and you can even unlock two additional events and other cool stuff. The tasks are pretty simple, though, so you can unlock just about everything in a very short amount of time. I can't say it enough, but if developers really wanted to extend the shelf life of their single-player sports games, they would include more "Hot Shots" types of features. As it is, ITF remains 90% a multiplayer game, which isn't a bad thing.



The events, in case you're wondering, include the 100M Dash, the Trap Shoot, the Long Jump, 100M Freestyle, Horizontal Bar, Weight Lifting, 110M Hurdles, Javelin Throw, Pole Vault, and Rhythmic Gymnastics. The button mashing that is the hallmark of the series is prevalent in most of the contests, but the Horizontal Bar and Rhythmic Gymnastics events use the "Dance Dance" theory of gameplay — time the on-screen icons with your DS2 icons. The gymnastics event even has multiple levels of difficulty (and a fourth can be won if you get Gold in the first three).



Graphically, ITF is very sharp, as long as the camera stays in tight on the athlete. If it gets too close to the crowd, the screen explodes in a sea of pixelization. The sounds are relatively weak, as you can't even get a national Anthem played for winning the Championship mode. Instead, you get a guitar laden "We Are the Champions" clone (which, along with all of the other songs, makes you wonder if this soundtrack wasn't supposed to be on EA's NASCAR game instead).

BOTTOM LINE

Despite a noticeable lack of single-player features and nondescript use of the ESPN license, International Track & Field is still a very enjoyable game. If you've got your friends over on a regular basis, odds are you'll probably find the group playing this game!

SCORE: 85%

SILVER

COMPATIBILITY 1 or 2 Players

Sky Odyssey

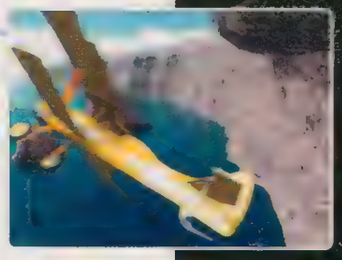
By Greg Off

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Genre	Flying
Publisher	Activision
Developer	Cross/SCEI
Origin	Japan
Format	DVD
# of Discs	1
Available	Now

In my opinion, Activision scored a coup by picking up Sky Odyssey, a delightful and entertaining flying/adventure title co-developed by Cross and Sony Computer Entertainment of Japan. While at first glance the game might look bare bones and uninteresting, there are so many cool things underneath its surface that it would be a shame if it was overlooked.

Describing Sky Odyssey is a bit of a challenge, as its closest cousin would be Nintendo's own Pilot Wings. The basic gist of the game is to commandeer one of many different aircraft (up to 11, which include bi-planes, monoplanes and jets, as well as a many hidden craft) and set out on a variety of harrowing missions across four uncharted islands.



The game takes place in a fictional setting somewhere out in the ocean where rough, unpredictable weather has hampered the establishment of commercial and passenger routes. Because of the wild weather patterns, these islands are relatively unexplored. Many areas are so remote that they remain completely untouched. The story behind the game revolves around these islands, where for years explorers and adventurers from all over the world have come and attempted to conquer their unknown wilderness. Of course, all have failed and none have returned alive to tell their tale. Somewhere on one of these islands, it is said that the lost tower of Maximus lies well-hidden, although, like the mythical lost city of Atlantis, no one has ever seen it with their own eyes. It will be up to you, being the daring adventurer that you are, to uncover five pieces of a lost map and then use it to reveal Maximus.

Sky Odyssey is comprised of five game modes: Adventure, Target, Sky Canvas, Training and Free Flight. The bulk of the game is the Adventure mode, where you will embark on over 35 different missions around the islands. Each mission is a bit varied and has its own set of objectives you must safely accomplish before landing at a predetermined destination. Some missions are as simple as getting from point A to B, while others are much more complicated and much more dangerous. One of my favorite missions is titled "The Great Divide". In this mission, you must cross a large mountain range while being buffeted around by gusts of wind in the middle of a snowy blizzard. To make matters worse, your plane is too heavy to make it across, forcing you to dump most of your fuel when you get to the base of the mountains and, consequently, leaving you with just three minutes of fuel left to get to the landing strip on the other side. Not only do you have to contend with being windswept, low visibility, falling rocks and treacherous ravines, you also have to time your fuel dump perfectly or risk crashing into the mountains in a fiery explosion. Adding incentive to the missions, there are a variety of checkpoint rings strategically placed throughout each level you can fly through for extra points. Upon completing each mission, you will be graded on a variety of objectives, including the time it took to complete the mission, the amount of damage taken, acrobatic points you were able to pull off (loops, low altitude, etc.) and the number of checkpoint rings you flew through.

Controlling the different aircraft in Sky Odyssey is one of the things that makes it so good. The game offers up two different control schemes — easy and normal — with normal being the most satisfying and realistic of the two. In the normal control mode, you get to control the pitch and yaw of your aircraft using both the left analog thumbstick and the L and R buttons. After a few minutes of getting down the basics, you'll feel like you could go out and fly the real thing (but please don't). Like I mentioned earlier, there is also a Training mode that will help you earn your wings.

Graphically, Sky Odyssey is a mixed bag. Many of the environments and backgrounds lean to the bland side with a lot of repeating texture sets. Once in a while it approaches greatness, especially when there is weather involved. The rain, snow, fast moving clouds and lightning are truly inspired, and when you add in some of the most convincing and realistic sound effects ever heard in a video game, you start to suspend your disbelief. In addition, the game runs at 60 frames per second, with only a few moments of slowdown here and there (a problem that plagued the preview version). Added to the audio/visual mix is the one of the best musical soundtracks I've ever heard in a video game. The music in the game will change in mid-stream depending on the type of situation you're in. When you're flying over calm waters, the music is soothing and tranquil, but as soon as you get in danger, it ramps up with the tempo of the game. Overall, it's very epic and reminds me of a John Williams score.

Bottom Line

I really, really, really liked Sky Odyssey. The game is easy to pick up yet difficult to master. It's completely addictive and fun, and there is plenty long-term gameplaying to be had. While it could have been a little prettier to look at, the overall package and gameplay experience makes up for it's graphical shortcomings. This is one title I heartily recommend.

Score: 95%

PSE2 Editor's Choice Gold

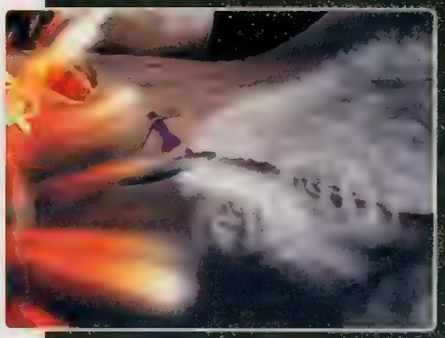
Compatibility 1 Player

SURFING H3O

EVERYONE
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

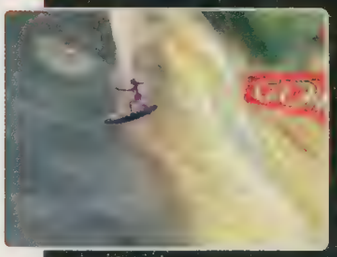
BY DAVE WINDING

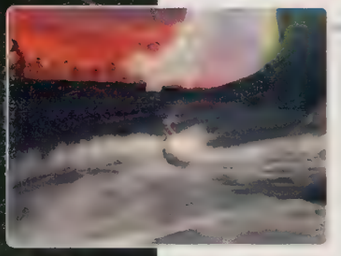
Genre	Sports
Publisher	Rockstar
Developer	Opus
Origin	Japan
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	Now!



The launch of the PS2 in North America has been a most interesting experience. While there is not one game that makes you want to brave the line at your local retailer — like Mario 64 did when the N64 was launched — there are a number of games in the catalogue that, when taken together, make the PS2 a must-buy. Do you know how long it took for PSOne to get its first surfing game? 5 years! Here we are at ground zero and we already have two extreme sports (including SSX) covered. While Surfing H3O may not be a perfect game, it is simply amazing to consider that you can ride the wild surf before the PS2 has even seen its first Xmas.

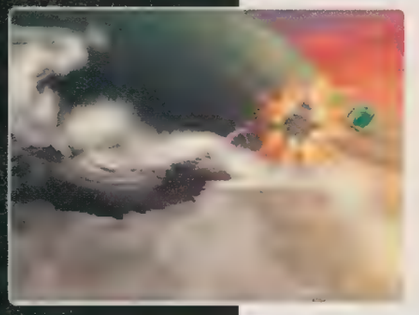
Anyone that has ever surfed (I started as a teenager but, as an adult (even though I live a few blocks from the ocean), I don't have the time to make the 5:00 AM wake-up calls) can tell you of the sheer excitement and terror that you feel as a 10' wall of water comes cascading over your head, and that the feeling of the water under your board is everything. While these are two difficult things for a video game to pull off, H3O does a reasonable job of re-creating the sensation.





The game features six different waves to ride, ranging from sunsets and surfing in the fog, to nighttime and surfing in a snow storm (Hey... It's a video game!). To varying degrees, the waves look great and riding them from the crest to the base is both challenging and addictive. The basic game has you playing in Tournament Mode, where you must accumulate a set number of points (depending on the wave and the difficulty setting you are playing on). Points are awarded for running into red, blue and green floating spheres, pulling off stunts and for time spent riding in the "tube." In addition, you are awarded points for simply crossing the finish line before you wipe out one too many times. By beating the game on its three different difficulty settings, you are able to unlock new surfers, boards and waves.

While point accumulation can be accomplished in a number of different ways, the game is really all about technique, speed and stunts. You need to paddle down the face quickly (L1 and R1), get up on your feet (L3 and R3 buttons at the same time), then manipulate your board so that you are riding at the base of the wave to maintain maximum speed — thus allowing you to stay in front of the wave, snagging the spheres and jamming over the top before the full brunt of the wave finds you. To help you to feel like you are on the board, Rockstar supplies you with a fingerboard version of a deck that attaches over the top of the two analog sticks found on the Dual Shock2. Moving the board up and down with the left stick represents your left foot and the right stick takes care of your right side. Once you are up, you can squat, lean back or forward on the board and try to catch a speed burst as you attack the wall of the wave. It is all a little tricky to master — particularly if you are new to the physics of the sport, but very rewarding once you do.



Unfortunately, as good as the water and play mechanics are, the game is flawed by its relative lack of depth and its one most unforgivable shortcoming — the lack of a free ride mode. While the game features a tutorial to get you going (although it strangely becomes unavailable once you beat the game on Easy), you can't do anything but head toward the finish line on these waves. I would have loved to do nothing but ride the waves and see how long I could stay up — or how many points I could accumulate before wiping out.

As it stands, Surfing H3O is a pretty cool first attempt at surfing on the PS2 marred by its lack of depth and a practice mode. It features great graphics and control, perfect music (well... maybe not perfect — until you get the Beach Boys, Jan and Dean, the Surfaris, etc.) for the style of game and addictive gameplay. To most, it's probably going to be a rental, but I really enjoyed the challenge and the environments.

BOTTOM LINE

Think of Surfing H3O as a poor man's SSX on melted snow. While it certainly can't be considered a great game, it is well worth taking a look at — particularly if you have been dying to play a good surfing game (the last quality one was found on "California Games" on the Atari Lynx). The water is good and the gameplay is solid, but the tricks could be a little more creative and fun. There certainly will be more polished efforts in the future but, for now, it ain't bad.

SCORE: 88%

SILVER

COMPATIBILITY

1 or 2 Players

Vibration Function Compatible

Q BALL
BILLIARDS MASTER

BY MARK ANDROVICH

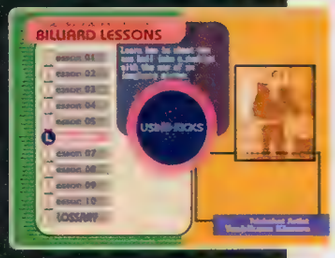
EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Genre	Leisure sports
Publisher	Take 2 Interactive
Developer	ASK Co. Ltd.
Origin	Japan
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	Now!

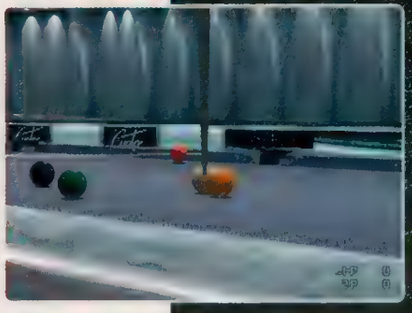
Looks like I purchased my PS2 just in time to help save Eric from reviewing all the fishing, bowling, and billiards games. Normally, games such as these — which are considered niche titles since they appeal only to a small portion of the buying public — don't appear until a system has become well-established. With two pool games available at or near the launch of PlayStation2, either the publishers already have a lot of faith in the new system, or else they are hoping against hope that the early adopters are also interested in purchasing a billiards game.

The programmers appear to have accurately replicated the physics involved, as far as the naked eye can tell, but this is nothing new. Nearly every billiards game after Trick Shot for the Atari 2600 has had reasonably accurate physics models. If there are discrepancies between Q-Ball, Real Pool, and the three prior PSOne billiards games, I sure can't tell.

The differences between the games, therefore, come down to the "whistles and bells." What extra features set Q-Ball apart from any other pool game? Well, nothing really. As with Real Pool, the high-res graphics are very impressive, but where are the other players? In Q-Ball, the CPU opponents are represented by non-animated facial pictures whose dialogue consists of printed text. Certainly the emotion engine of the PS2 can handle polygonal competitors or onlookers! At the very least, what about voice samples? The tables and environments look great, although perhaps a bit too perfect-there's nary a scratch on the felt or chalk mark on the cue ball. Why bother with 3D environments at all if you don't plan to populate them with people or animated neon signs, pinball machines, and such?



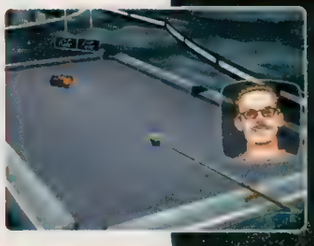
There is a tutorial option, although the text instructions given are pretty sparse. The Frozen Game option presents fifty different configurations in which the object is to sink one ball and leave the cue ball as close as possible to a second ball. It's fun, and it does improve one's skill overall, but it still isn't as interesting as a trick shot option would have been. Although you can just jump in and play a solo game, there are also ten CPU opponents of varying skill whom you can challenge to games of 9 Ball (US and International rules), 8 Ball, Rotation, and Straight Pool. Bowlliards and Carom games are hidden bonuses, which means that the average player may never get to try them. There aren't any multiplayer games such as Cutthroat or 5-9, however, which means that Q-Ball doesn't offer as much variety as it could have. On the other hand, these missing variations are pretty obscure and won't be appreciated except by billiards aficionados.



That is one of the main reasons why pool videogames are considered niche titles. Those people who are really into billiards as a hobby (sport?) would rather spend their time perfecting their skills on a table somewhere in the real world. Those of us who play pool only occasionally, but are otherwise hardcore videogamers, are more likely to spend our cash on more unique launch titles. Without comedic or arcade elements a la Hot Shots Golf, Q-Ball is too much of a simulation to appeal to non-billiards fans. At the same time, without all the numerous game and table variations, it is not deep enough to appeal to pool sharks either.

For me, the perfect PS2 pool game would allow players to control polygonal characters moving freely inside a 3D environment. Let us walk over to the jukebox and change the tunes (no more Muzak, please!), play a quick pinball game, and interact with onlookers and potential opponents. It doesn't have to be too complex, but a reward system would be nice. Players could earn skill attributes or money to purchase better pool cues, for example. Developers could include a storyline, adding RPG qualities to the game, or allow players to bet money on the outcome. If this sounds like wishful thinking, it really isn't — the PSOne games Pool Hustler, Backstreet Billiards, and Ultimate 8-Ball had many of these elements which Q-Ball lacks.

On a more positive note, the interface for controlling the cue angle and strike point on the cue ball is easy to learn, and I appreciate being able to adjust the camera angles during the game. The rules of all the games can be viewed on-screen, and there is even a glossary of terms. And, as I mentioned earlier, the physics are accurate and the graphics look impressive. Q-Ball is by no means a bad game-it just fails to offer many options that were standard in older PS One billiards titles, and it hardly takes advantage of the capabilities of the PS2.



BOTTOM LINE

Of the two (!) pool games available, Q-Ball edges out Real Pool slightly. Still, the PS2 is capable of much more. Even without polygonal players or interactive environments, the developers could have included more pool variations. For less than half the price, you can still find PSOne games (such as Backstreet Billiards) which, frankly, play just as well.

SCORE: 82%

SILVER

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PlayStation ®

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

With Playstation 2 making the biggest software splash in years, we barely have room to cover everything we need to. Out of necessity, we are therefore making a change as we fit. Only reviews. Most games will have no great summary reviews, with a few of the more impressive games having a full page. The shorter ones will still have a full review (and not their full complement). No matter, you'll find out everything you need to know to decide which games would make a worthy purchase.

007 Racing

Genre Car Combat Publisher EA Games Developer Eutechnyx
Origin UK Format CD # of Discs 1 Available Now!

The "racing" part of the game is one that we still haven't figured out yet, as the game relies more on elements borrowed from classic PSX titles like Twisted Metal & Felony 11-79. Each of the game's different missions presents you with specific challenges — a laundry list of things to accomplish, and if you should fail in any one of them, you'll have to start back at the beginning. The game, therefore, becomes more challenging than it should be, as you will find yourself going back to the beginning, sometimes after having already accomplished two, three, or four of the requirements. You pick up various weapons to use against the enemy. One of our biggest complaints is that in the middle of using one weapon (the machine guns, for example), if you should pick up another weapon (either on purpose or by accident), the new weapon will become the active weapon. This can cause all sorts of problems, from blowing yourself up with the launch of a missile, or using a single use weapon in the wrong situation.

The end of level cut scenes are nicely rendered, and contain tons of voice overs sampled from various Bond flicks (only the Pierce movies, though). A decent game, but without the Bond license, it wouldn't receive much attention.

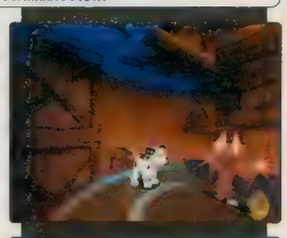
SCORE 82

102 Dalmations: Puppies to the Rescue

Genre Act/Plat Publisher Eidos Developer Crystal Dynamics
Origin US Format CD # of Discs 1 Available Now!

102 Dalmatians is another Disney movie game that tries to simplify things for a younger audience. In the game, you play as either of two Dalmatian puppies that must find their brethren before they fall prey to the evil plans of Cruella De Ville.

As the puppies, you can attack by either barking at, or rolling into, the enemies. In addition, you also jump, sniff to find the trail of whatever it is the game has you looking for at the moment, and dig. While the game is presented in real-time 3D, go-anywhere environments, the addition of the sniffing ability allows younger players to always find where they need to go. Graphically, the game looks nice and is on-par with previous Crystal efforts, but the music is a serious rip-off of the GEX soundtracks. The game controls well and involves a lot of bone collecting, jumping and mini-puzzle solving. In addition, there are mini-games and secrets to be found, as well as stickers that are awarded to the player for accomplishing different tasks. In the end, 102 Dalmatians is a pleasing, simple little game that younger fans of the movie should get a kick out of.



SCORE 90

Army Men: Sarge's Heroes 2

Genre Act/Adv Publisher 3DO Developer 3DO
Origin U.S. Format CD # of Discs 1 Available Now!

Having played all seven of the Army Men titles released in just the past year, the last thing we wanted to do was play another one — especially since the original Sarge's Heroes was lacking in just about every way (although we did enjoy the N64 version).

At ease! Gone is the excessive fog, poor collision detection, weak AI, and erratic camera of last year's game. Although the Army Men series isn't known for impressive graphics, they seem improved and the controls are also more responsive than in the original. At the same time, the developers have kept the humorous "real world" settings, and truly enjoyable computer-generated cinema scenes. The only downside is that the "toys come to life" motif has become cliche, thanks to Toy Commander, Toy Story 2, and the Army Men games themselves. In addition, although there are more than 15 different missions, you can essentially fire and dodge your way through all of them. Without the problems that made the original so frustrating, SH2 is a good (though simplistic) arcade-style action game. It would be a shame if the public, disappointed with the series thus far, goes AWOL and misses out on the fun to be had.

SCORE 87

Breakout

Genre Arcade Publisher Hasbro Developer Supersonic
Origin UK Format CD # of Discs 1 Available Now!

Hasbro's Pong update was great fun, thanks to a variety of games and multiplayer modes. But Breakout was designed as a solo contest — one player anticipating the ricochet of the balls, trying to break through a wall of bricks. Although this new version does feature a two-to-four player game, each person works against a wall of their own (sending obstacles to opponents). While fun, the multiplayer mode feels like a last minute addition, which is a pity since it is the only part of Breakout with long-term replay value.

The original coin-op is just about as basic as you can get. The attempt at characterization — including cut-scenes with captioned dialogue — just didn't work for me. Adding power-ups and transplanting the action to 3D — featuring sheep, pyramids, dragons, and other fanciful elements in themed levels — can only take the gameplay so far. That's not to say that there aren't a lot of fun arcade-style moments, such as flipping a ball backwards at a wolf giving chase or knocking eggs into rows of chickens in a hen house, but the essential task of bouncing a ball into objects won't sustain your interest for very long. Breakout's a fun diversion, but nothing addictive.

SCORE 82

Breath of Fire IV

Genre RPG Publisher Capcom Developer Capcom
Origin Japan Format CD # of Discs 1 Available Now!

The Breath of Fire series often features the return of characters in name only, and BOF IV is no exception. Our main character, Ryu, has collapsed in the desert with no memory. He is found by Nina, on a quest to find her missing sister. Along the way, they discover that Ryu's memory and the location of Nina's sister are just the beginning of world-changing events.

As an RPG, BOF IV has a few problems, such as a slow to develop storyline and occasionally frustrating mini-games. Breath has more in its favor, however, including a nice combination of 3D and hand-drawn graphics, animated cut sequences, and unique Combat and Skill Systems. Characters learn skills by observing enemy attacks in battle, and these skills can be transferred among characters. Additionally, spells and physical attacks can be combined together for high-damaging combo attacks. Your party contains six characters, three of which are "active" at one time. The remaining characters are computer controlled, and may cast support magic or attacks. This adds a nice strategic element which is sometimes missing in turn-based RPGs. Finally, you can also control the all-powerful villain at certain points during the story. Is that cool or what?

SCORE 95

Buzz Lightyear of Star Command

Genre Action/Platform Publisher Traveler's Tales Developer Activision
Origin US Format CD # of Discs 1 Available Now!

We are big fans of the Toy Story movies, which were written for adults as much as children, but we were somewhat disappointed to see Disney launch a spin-off cartoon series intended just for kids (even though we understood the financial reasons for doing so). Likewise, last year's Toy Story 2 video game was enjoyable for both kids and adults, but this game is definitely geared towards younger players.

In each mission, Buzz chases an evil agent of Zurg. When he reaches the end of the path, he will battle the villain. Along the way, he must shoot a variety of robotic enemies, disarm bombs, collect health and power recharges, and obtain "coins" for purchasing weapons and vehicles. Buzz can also earn medals by completing the level under a time limit, rescuing the little green men, and collecting a certain amount of coins.

The missions take place in generic settings such as a lava world, an ice world, a jungle, and even a farm. Video clips, featuring characters from the show, advance the storyline. Young fans of the animated series might want to check it out, but for the average player the game is too simplistic and gets repetitive quickly.

SCORE 82

Championship Surfing

Genre Sports | Publisher Mattel | Developer Krome
Origin USA | Format CD | # of Discs 1 | Available Now!

Wow, no surfing games for five years of the PlayStation's life and now we have a total of three to choose from. Let's see how Championship Surfing fares, shall we?

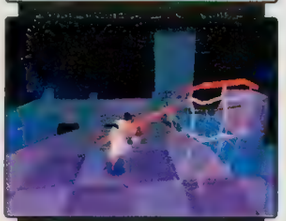
The premise is simple enough — two gameplay modes, lots of multiplayer options, plenty of different surfers and boards, and enough varied "courses" to keep you happy. The gameplay modes are Arcade and Championship. In Championship, you can open up more beach locations (courses) each time you win a competition. However, the difficulty level (beginner, amateur, pro) determines the number of beaches you can surf (four, seven, and ten, respectively). The beginner level lets you get right into doing tricks, without having to use the tricky control scheme required to pull off the moves on the higher difficulty settings. The gameplay is lightning quick, and feels like it's going at twice the normal speed. Once you get used to it, though, the speed will feel "normal", and if you've ever surfed "for real", the intensity of the game will seem quite familiar. The multi-player options included kart-style gameplay features, such as the ability to hinder your opponent with various projectiles!

Championship Surfer is a nice 4th quarter surprise, and definitely worth your time!

SCORE 91

The Emperor's New Groove

Genre Action/Platform | Publisher Sony | Developer Argonaut
Origin UK | Format CD | # of Discs 1 | Available Now!



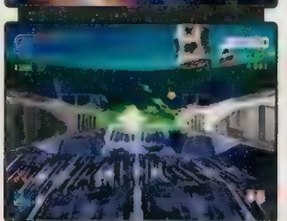
The best part about Sony/Disney's Emperor's New Groove is the humor. Unfortunately, the same creativity wasn't brought to the gameplay. The game plays like a cross between Croc (which Argonaut also developed — the engine of which is used in ENG) and Spyro. You must collect coins, etc. within a fairly non-violent context and help Emperor Kuzco become human again, from the llama state that you play the game in. The graphics are solid, the voice is tremendous and the music is 00-hip.

And the gameplay IS enjoyable. It is just that serious action/platform players will have done it all before. You begin in the Village and spend time in its four levels. It is a very short, linear journey loaded with helpful hints — most provided by helpful villagers who have voices to go along with their dialogue. After the first boss, it is on to "Jungle Night." While gameplay does become quite a bit more complex here, it is still nothing more than an average challenge for the experienced gamer. Still, ENG is an excellent movie tie-in for the younger gamers in your family who enjoyed the film and reasonably fun for adults.

SCORE 90

Galaga: Destination Earth

Genre Shooter | Publisher Hasbro | Developer King o t Jungle
Origin UK | Format CD | # of Discs 1 | Available Now



The original Galaga was enjoyable in its day — but that day was 19 years ago! Other than the ability to recover a captured ship and double your firepower, the game was hardly groundbreaking.

The problem with trying to update/remake a simple shooting game such as Galaga is that the only thing you can do, bringing the 2D gameplay into 3D, has already been done. What are Einhander, R-Type Delta, and Star Fox anyway, if not 3D versions of shooting games? Galaga mimics these games through three different camera angles, but never comes close to their quality. It looks okay, and plays fast enough, but it is difficult to line up your shots. And for whatever reason, players are not allowed to save their progress. If you can't play through all nine worlds in one sitting, you'll have to start over from the beginning.

At $19, Galaga might be an okay purchase for a young kid who doesn't know any better, but fans of shooters won't find any good reason to play it and fans of the coin-op Galaga can get the original (as well as six other arcade games) in Namco's Museum Vol. 1 for the same price.

SCORE 76

Driver 2

Genre Action/Racing | Publisher Infogrames | Developer Reflections
Origin U.K. | Format CD | # of Discs 2 | Available Now!

If ever a game showed the limitations of the PlayStation, Driver 2 is it. In order to accommodate the action, the frame rate takes a hit and background buildings pop up out of nowhere. These problems also plagued the original, yet it sold approximately 4 million copies. Players obviously looked beneath the rough exterior and appreciated the underlying gem of a game. The same applies here.

Driver 2 improves upon the original in every way except the graphics. The storyline and cinemas are better, and the missions are organized in a more understandable way. These tasks are more varied than just pursuit or evasion, thanks to the ability to get out of your vehicle and run on foot. For example, one mission requires players to race a train, switching vehicles with one stalled on the track, and driving it (and the occupant trapped in the trunk) to safety. There are even decent multiplayer games, such as Capture the Flag, and no need for a parking garage driving test.

Driver 2 still features realistic physics and damage modeling and a great replay system. Although rough around the edges, it captures the thrills of a 70s-era "cop and robber" television show/movie.

SCORE 93

Final Fantasy IX

Genre RPG | Publisher Square | Developer EA/Square
Origin Japan | Format CD | # of Discs 4 | Available Now!

You've read the various previews, drooled over the screenshots, and now here it is. Game time. This review could be summed up in two words: GET IT!!! But, for those who've been asleep, Final Fantasy IX is the last of the series that will appear on the PlayStation.

It's hard to hit everything in such a brief space, so here's the highlights: A return to the "medieval" RPG settings of old; the return to four characters in a party; skills are associated with equipped items; you'll need to learn them to use them un-equipped; the return of super-deformed characters, which feature high animation levels; beautiful spell effects and Summons, which have had their casting times toned down; drop dead gorgeous CG cut sequences and backgrounds; familiar theme music throughout; a quick-starting, involving storyline; an event system that, at numerous points during the story, allows you to see plot developments from different character viewpoints; etc., etc., etc. Simply put, FFIX is one of those MUST PURCHASE titles. Even fans of earlier titles of the series disappointed by more recent "cyber-themed" settings will feel at home here.

SCORE 99

Hogs of War

Genre Strategy | Publisher Infogrames | Developer Sheffield
Origin U.K. | Format CD | # of Discs 1 | Available Now!

Hogs of War is a turn-based war simulator with a variety of humorous elements added. Each of the over 25 scenarios puts you in charge of at least three porcine soldiers with a variety of search, destroy, and defense missions. Though initially each soldier starts off as a mere grunt with only basic soldiering skills, you'll be able to promote your soldiers as you see fit. There are a variety of war-time pigs to utilize for each mission, including Medical personnel, Heavy Artillery porkers, Mine-Sweepers, and Espionage. It will be up to you to effectively spread special skills around your troops to create an effective fighting force. Kick hind and take no prisoners!

Hogs of War features strong AI coupled with a smooth learning curve. Where Hogs TRULY shines, however, is in its multiplayer functionality. You and three of your fellows can go at it in a variety of modes.

Hogs best feature is its worst curse. Hogs' gameplay is very reminiscent of the Worms series, only in 3D. Voice-overs after a time may become a bit tedious, but the numerous multiplayer options and number of single-player missions should keep most folks in, dare we say it... hog heaven.

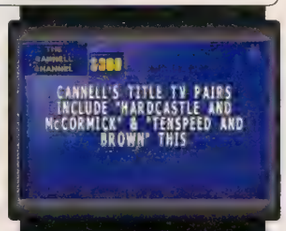
SCORE 92

Jeapordy 2nd Edition

Genre Trivia Publisher Hasbro Developer Artech Studios
Origin US Format CD # of Discs 1 Available Now!

Jeopardy 2nd Edition adds a few new options: there's a faster typing interface, behind-the-scenes video interviews with the people responsible for the show, a Tournament of Champions mode, a sample contestants exam, and over 4,200 new answers. In short, if you already own the last version, the new edition still may warrant a purchase.

That's not to say that the game doesn't still occasionally have problems recognizing valid responses. "Jackie Kennedy" and "Fishing for a compliment" weren't acceptable, for example, but "Jacqueline Kennedy" and "Fish for a compliment" were. Thankfully, the new edition still features an auto-complete function allowing players to fill in responses quickly. Of course, this also lets players see if their response is part of the game's database before they submit it. Hard-core Jeopardists will turn this feature off, and will also need to adjust the game's parameters. On the default setting, a single player can almost always buzz in before CPU opponents, leading to lopsided scores such as 31,400 to 3,100 (ever the optimist, Alex Trebek told Player 2 that he was "not too far off"). While it may not appeal to everyone, it is the best video game representation of the show to date.



SCORE 88

Knockout Kings 2001

Genre Boxing Publisher EA Sports Developer EA Sports
Origin US Format CD # of Discs 1 Available Now!

EA has added just enough new features to Knockout Kings 2001 to keep it from being an exact replica of last year's game. For fans of the sport of kings, the most prominent addition to the franchise is the inclusion of female boxers. Christy Martin heads the cast of eight ladies, which also includes Mia St. John. I guess this is a good thing, but when it comes down to who you're going to pick as a fighter-"Let's see, should I be Ali, Sugar Ray, De La Hoya, or maybe I'll be Christy" — it just doesn't seem to fly. The career mode has been expanded, allowing you to now choose your home gym (from a selection of seven), trainer, and cutman, all of which give you different bonuses. There's also "Dynamic Punch Control", which lets you throw limitless combinations (great for the Slugfest option).

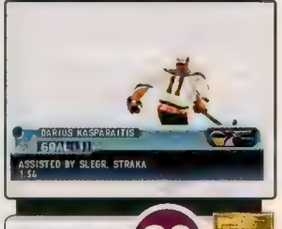
One of the best things KK2K1 has going for it is the voice talents. No less than Mills Lane, Jimmy Lennon Jr., Al Bernstein, Max Kellerman, and Teddy Atlas provide everything from ring introductions, to trivia, to play-by-play and color commentary. Except for some minor conversation collision, the communication is really well done.

SCORE 94

NHL 2001

Genre Hockey Publisher EA Sports Developer EA Sports
Origin Canada Format CD # of Discs 1 Available Now!

Last year's version of NHL was the best yet, and things get a tad better for 2001. The game still looks great, but the players still don't skate as smoothly as they do in 989's NHL FaceOff. Don't look for anything new gameplay-wise, though there have been a few game mode option improvements. NHL Challenge has been added (it was only a matter of time, right? All the other EA Sports games have a challenge mode), and it features three different skill levels worth of tasks to complete. Each time you accomplish a task, you are awarded points that can be used to help increase the fortunes of your created player. A nice touch, and certainly one that we were all expecting. Jim Hughson and Bill Clement provide the commentary. Hughson also does the play-by-play for EA's Triple Play, and every time he says something, I expect to hear the voice of Buck Martinez (TP color), not Bill Clement. Odd. Lastly, it was nice to see that one of my favorite bands, Collective Soul, had one of their songs (Off of Dosage) used for the intro sequence!



SCORE 92

Jungle Book Rhythm n' Groove

Genre Puzzle Publisher Ubisoft Developer Disney Interactive
Origin France Format CD # of Discs 1 Available Now!

Even though "The Bear Necessities" and "I Wanna Be Like You" are great songs, The Jungle Book doesn't immediately spring to mind when considering a Disney musical video game. Not to worry! The game's seven new songs, along with remixed versions of the classics mentioned earlier, capture the essence of the movie perfectly.

Like Knoami's Bemani games, gameplay is deceptively simple. Players press the D-pad in the direction of the falling arrows, timed to the beat of the music. On tougher difficulty levels, you'll have to press two directions at once (using the action buttons as a second D-pad). Meanwhile, you can enter a special sequence to activate power-ups. The game also offers both cooperative and versus multiplayer modes. It can also be purchased with an optional dance pad that will soon have you jumping around your living room like a maniac.

With its "Simon"-type gameplay, JB:RNG should appeal to fans of Bust a Groove, Dance Dane Revolution and PaRappa. However, its mainstream music, movie license, and five levels of adjustable difficulty will make it more accessible to the general public. This is a great family game!

SCORE 93

Nascar 2001

Genre Racing Publisher EA Sports Developer Black Box
Origin U.S. Format CD # of Discs 1 Available Now!

NASCAR 2001 features a full field of 34 drivers over 27 courses and, for the first time, the ability to race the vaunted Daytona 500. A variety of race options are available: full season, fantasy tracks only, or a combination of tracks (road, short, fantasy courses, etc.).

A smooth frame rate and less pop-up are readily apparent. In addition to detailed vehicle models, inside views now feature animated driver hands and working gauges. Sound-wise, you have a choice between a variety of country music or commentary and pit communications. Unfortunately, commentary is sparse and communications are generally late and unhelpful. This is only the beginning of the problems that plague 2001, which make it inferior to its graphically poorer predecessor.

Driver AI, initially promised to be individually modeled, is very tame with little awareness of your actions or other vehicles. Car physics are very arcade-like — you'll be hard-pressed to see or cause a major pile-up. In many ways it seems the developers chose style over substance this year. NASCAR 2001 offers much replayability, but it doesn't accurately recreate the TRUE NASCAR driving experience.

SCORE 80

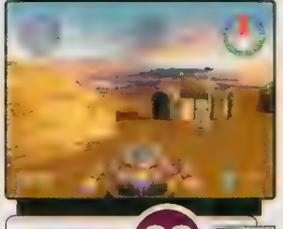
Star Wars: Demolition

Genre Vehicle combat Publisher LucasArts Developer Luxoflux
Origin US Format CD # of Discs 1 Available Now!

The idea of a vehicle combat game set in the Star Wars universe seems so cool that we wonder why no one thought of it before. Thankfully, LucasArts turned to Luxoflux — creators of the Vigilante 8 series, arguably the best vehicle combat games on the market.

SW: Demolition is a welcome departure from the recent Episode One games. Players take the helm of vehicles such as a landspeeder, AT-ST, snowspeeder, pod racer, and even a Rancor(!) as they battle in familiar locales. As in the V8 games, there are weapon power-ups, secret passages, and environmental hazards such as the Wampa on Hoth or the Sarlaac Pit on Tatooine. If you have no idea how to pronounce those words, you probably won't appreciate the attention to detail as much as diehard Star Wars fans will. Even so, you can still get into Demolition without knowing your Han from your Alderaan.

The downside is that the underlying game engine is no longer as impressive as it was two years ago, and Demolition somehow seems less polished than V8. Nevertheless, the Star Wars characters, vehicles, and music are finally put to good use in a game you won't be ashamed to play.



SCORE 89

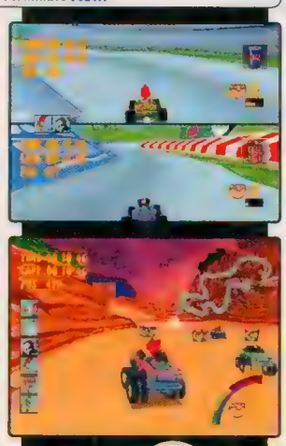
Woody Woodpecker Racing

Genre Kart racing | Publisher Konami | Developer Syrox
Origin UK | Format CD | # of Discs 1 | Available Now!

With such a crowded market, a kart racing game must have popular characters, well-designed tracks, or a fine-tuned engine for a chance at success. Unfortunately, WWR has none of these.

Walter Lantz' characters are no longer household names, and, aside from irritating voices, there is nothing unique about them — especially since all their vehicles look and control the same. Visually, the courses are brightly-colored, yet nondescript. There is never a sense of speed, although touching the grass on the sides of the narrow track slows you to a crawl.

Thanks to the inclusion of a "hit" move, along with unbalanced computer AI, you can lead for three laps, hit all the turbo boosts, drop dozens of obstacles behind you, and still find yourself in last place after getting bumped from behind near the finish line. While you can also hit opponents this way, you've got the additional handicap of having to watch the road at the same time. The vehicle controls are also unnecessarily complicated, requiring the use of at least six different buttons. Frustrating gameplay is just the icing on this mediocre cake.



SCORE 68

NASCAR Heat

Genre Racing | Publisher Hasbro | Developer Dice
Origin US | Format CD | # of Discs 1 | Available Now!

NASCAR Heat tries to ignite a spark of originality in the smoldering world of NASCAR racing games. But, by the time players cross the finish line, even serious NASCAR nuts will feel like they've done it all before.

The title was developed with the input of NASCAR driver Bobby Labonte, and it shows in the authentic nature of the game. Other top drivers also played NASCAR Heat, and you can try to beat their best times in Race the Pro mode. You'll also find the standard Single Race, Championship and Multiplayer options, the last of which is a split-screen race for two players. The most unique offering is called Beat the Heat, in which you try to win trophies in 36 NASCAR challenges. Many of these involve drafting and passing opponents, taking turns at speed, and other essential racing skills. Winning the gold trophy in each unlocks the Battle of the Best. All of this is fun for a little while, but eventually it starts to feel repetitive.

NASCAR Heat features 30 different drivers and 19 official NASCAR tracks. The controls are decent, but the grainy graphics are average compared to other titles. Only diehard racing fans should consider renting this one.

SCORE 79

Torneko: The Last Hope

Genre RPG | Publisher Enix | Developer Enix
Origin Japan | Format CD | # of Discs 1 | Available Now!

Torneko takes you back to the simpler days in terms of RPG format and execution. Set in the Dragon Warrior universe, this mini-RPG features our hero, the plump chef Torneko, as he attempts to rid his town and surrounding areas from an increasing amount of rampaging monsters.

Though Torneko won't win any graphical awards, it does feature a nice mixture of old school graphics with claymation backgrounds. Gameplay reminds us of the countless hours we spent in college — not studying, but on the VAX playing a little dungeon crawler called Rogue. Like Square's Chocobo's Dungeon, Torneko features randomly generated dungeons with a host of monsters that require different strategies to defeat. You also must also be aware of Torneko's growing hunger. Along the way, you'll find foodstuffs that you'll need to carefully manage in order to sustain Torneko, or you'll be whisked away from the dungeon losing your items. Initially we weren't too impressed with Torneko; it isn't much to look at, and it doesn't feature a stirring soundtrack or deep game engine. Not all RPGs have to be epic to be fun though, and with a host of cute and interesting ideas, Torneko does just fine as it is.

SCORE 92

Ducati World

Genre Racing | Publisher Acclaim | Developer Attn to Detail
Origin UK | Format CD | # of Discs 1 | Available Now!

The latest Gran Turismo clone isn't even a car racing title. Ducati World features the Ducati line of motorcycles with over 40 Ducati bikes from over 30 years of history.

The game offers up just two modes: Quick Race and Ducati World. Ducati World is the main mode, and here you'll find a game that mimics GT down to its licensing tests and menu design. You'll need to pass an increasingly difficult set of licensing tests to participate in a variety of races. As you progress, you can use your winnings to purchase additional vehicles or enhancements.

Racing is done on a nice set of tracks and, although there are a few graphical problems and glitches, they never make Ducati World unplayable. More sim than arcade racer, the AI can be treacherous — it doesn't take much to send you flying. Little more than the sound of your bikes can be heard, but it's always a nice touch in a racing title when you can actually hear from the correct side as an opponent is approaching you from the rear. In the end, Ducati isn't as polished as a Gran Turismo, but is a solid racer in its own right.

SCORE 93

RC de Go!

Genre Racing | Publisher Acclaim | Developer Taito
Origin Japan | Format CD | # of Discs 1 | Available Now!

When we first heard about this title, we expected it to be another RC 3D racer clone. Then we saw the title screen... Radio Control Car Simulator? RC de Go! takes you back to the days of REAL radio control racing at parks, controlling your vehicle from the side as you negotiate a variety of tracks. So simple, and yet different enough from other RC racers that it truly stands out. RC de Go! features a mammoth upgrade system that allows you, via your winnings, to purchase a large variety of vehicle enhancements and body parts in order to negotiate the various road and dirt courses.

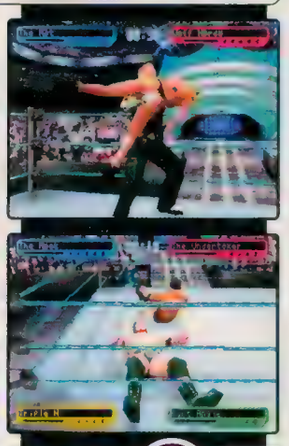
RC de Go! uses a simple graphic style to display its courses and vehicles — bright colors, spotlights during night racing, and rain effects come together as you negotiate a smooth curve of more complex race tracks while advancing through the game's main tournament mode. Quick Race and Time Attack racing options are available and, although the AI is basically non-existent (with vehicles simply increasing in speed as you progress), there are such a variety of parts and vehicles available that RC de Go! makes for a pleasant afternoon go round.

SCORE 85

WWF Smackdown 2: Know Your Role

Genre Wrestling | Publisher THQ | Developer Yukes
Origin U.S. | Format CD | # of Discs 1 | Available Now!

Take a good game, address its issues, and make it better. That describes the philosophy behind Smackdown 2. The CAW section this year features Standard and Advanced creation options. Standard mirrors last year (Head, Upper, Lower), while the new Advanced feature allows MUCH more character customization: Eyes, eye color, nose, mouth, hair, facial hair, tattoos, pants, shorts, masks, and separate horn choices (to go with the masks) are among the HUGE amount of options to choose from. This year you can preview your wrestling moves, and tag team moves have even been added to the mix! (YES the 3D is in there! Two versions in fact). Cut sequences are more varied and more tightly integrated with wrestling matches, and grudge matches reflect interviews and attacks that have taken place. Wrestlers discuss strategy; you'll even have fights break out after cut sequences. Add the return of the long career mode, a large roster, the ability to create stables and managers, hidden wrestlers and moves to unlock, and that's just the icing on the already delicious cake!



SCORE 98

Dragon's Lair II: Timewarp

Digital Leisure **N/A Minutes** **Enabled for all regions**

This sequel to Dragon's Lair wasn't widely distributed, so you might have missed it in the arcades the first time around. Now married with children, Princess Daphne has been kidnapped by the evil wizard Mordroc. He plans to force her to marry him — apparently a fate worse than death considering how old and ugly he is (But did she consider his financial situation?). Dirk the Daring must rescue his beloved before she becomes lost forever in a time warp.

There is more humor involved in this game, thanks to a confrontation with Dirk's mother-in-law and some imaginative death sequences. The game is also given to flights of whimsy courtesy of a time machine. For example, after entering a mirror, Dirk encounters Alice in Wonderland characters such as the Mad Hatter, Tweedledee and Tweedledum, and the Queen of Hearts. There are sequences which take place in an Egyptian pyramid, and a miniature-sized Dirk even has to elude an angry cat on and around Beethoven's piano, jumping from musical instrument to instrument as they float through the sky. What do these scenes and images have to do with each other? Not a lot. You can't help but think that some of these sequences were created just to save some money by limiting the amount of background animation.

Dragon's Lair II can, once again, be viewed as a movie rather than played as a game. It seems a little longer than both Space Ace and the original Dragon's Lair, and there are more decision points than in the prior games. As a bonus, the DVD contains a pre-production version of the game's video and audio with several pencil test animation segments. Interesting, but not as informative as the interviews of the prior discs. DL2 is still more of a collector's item or novelty DVD than a game you'll want to play for more than a day.

Rating:

Kingdom II: Shadoan

Digital Leisure **N/A Minutes** **Dolby Digital 2.0 • DTS • Not Rated • Enabled for all regions**

Based on the arcade game Thayer's Quest, probably the only coin-op to ever feature a membrane keyboard for input, Shadoan was created and produced by Rick Dyer. Unfortunately, Don Bluth was not responsible for the animation, and it shows. Even though the subject matter is more serious and compelling than Space Ace or the Dragon's Lair series, the animation looks like something from a 1970's Saturday morning Filmation cartoon.

Player's take the role of Prince Lathan Kandor as he searches for the final two relics needed to reassemble an amulet which will allow him to defeat the evil Torlock. RPG fans, and readers of J.R.R. Tolkien's works, will feel right at home with the storyline.

Aside from the rudimentary animation, Shadoan is much more sophisticated than the other DVD games. For starters, there are two levels of difficulty — Apprentice and Wizard — each with its own ending. The easier difficulty level omits some of the puzzles and allows players more time to make life or death decisions (represented by an hourglass). The game can be set up for DTS or Dolby Stereo sound, and input is much different than the four compass directions or action button. Instead, players can consult maps, read history books, and utilize items in their inventory. If you are playing this game on your computer, through a DVD-ROM drive, you can also type clues into Lathan's journal.

Ultimately, however, you don't have a lot of freedom of choice. The game provides far too many clues, and if you make an incorrect, non-lethal decision, nothing really happens. Since your progress through the game cannot be saved, Shadoan is meant to be played in one sitting and therefore cannot immerse or engross players as much as a modern RPG's such as the Final Fantasy series. Once again, it is interesting only from the standpoint of a collector or videogame historian, but even then this title is lacking since there are no "making of" extras and you are unable to view the entire game as a movie.

Rating:

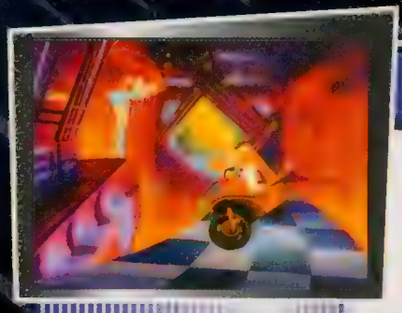
Dragon's Lair

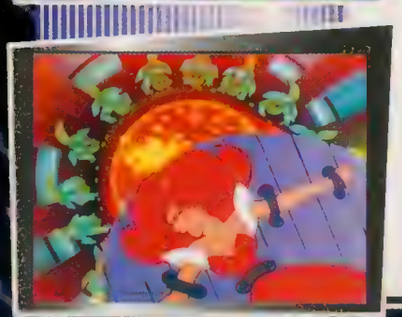
Digital Leisure **N/A Minutes** **Enabled for all regions**

This is the one that started it all. Players take the role of a valiant knight named Dirk the Daring, who is trying to rescue the coquettish Princess Daphne from the clutches of a dragon. The game consists entirely of animated sequences created by Don (Anastasia, An American Tail, Land Before Time) Bluth. In each room or area of the castle, Dirk will encounter obstacles. Some of the perils are immediately obvious, others will surprise you (the first time, at least). When an icon flashes on the screen, you must enter one of four compass directions or press the action button. Choose the correct action and the storyline will unfold, with a slight pause as the disk advances to a new animated sequence. Choose incorrectly and Dirk will die. Although there are normally visual clues to show you which way to go, the game quickly becomes a matter of memorization. Eventually, you'll figure out the proper input and move on.

One benefit of playing Dragon's Lair on the PS2 is that you can use the D-pad and X button instead of the DVD remote's cursor and "Enter" keys. The more obvious benefit is not having to drop more quarters in the machine every time your input is incorrect. Unfortunately, the game hasn't stood up well over time — there have been too many advances in videogame technology since 1983. A modern game such as Resident Evil: Code Veronica, for example, has better looking real-time environments, a better storyline, more control over the lead character, and hours of gameplay. Dragon's Lair lasts just under 10 minutes when all the correct choices are made. The disk does feature video clips and interviews with the people who created Dragon's Lair, and lets you watch the game as a continuous movie, but it is essentially more of a collector's item than a game you'll enjoy playing.

Rating:





Space Ace

Digital Leisure **N/A Minutes** **Enabled for all regions**

In development at approximately the same time as Dragon's Lair, Space Ace arrived in the arcades in 1983. It, too, featured animation by Don Bluth. Player's controlled an intrepid space explorer named Ace who is Earth's only hope against the evil Commander Borf. Borf plans to use his "infanto ray" to reduce the population to infants, allowing him to take over the planet. Unfortunately, Ace becomes exposed to the ray, turning him into his gangly, younger self (appropriately named Dexter). Of course, what story is complete without a damsel in distress? Ace's girlfriend, Kimberly, is kidnapped by Borf and must also be rescued.

Like Dragon's Lair before it, Space Ace requires players to input either the four compass directions or press the action button to overcome enemies and obstacles. However, the gameplay is not confined to rooms of a castle, which makes it somewhat more difficult to determine the proper course of action. Once again, there are visual clues in many cases, but you've ultimately got to memorize the sequences.

You can choose to watch the game as a continuous movie, rather than playing it, but it lasts a scant ten minutes or so. The DVD also contains broadcast footage from the personal archives of Don Bluth, Rick Dyer, and others involved with the arcade game. These materials will be of interest primarily to collectors and videogame historians. Although the animation is well-done, and in many cases more colorful than Dragon's Lair, as a game it won't hold your interest for very long.

Rating:

This section is where we dig up ratings from past issues and present them on one easy-to-read page, along with a little explanation/breakdown of our rating system. Use this as your buying guide throughout the year and as a reference for those older games that you might have missed (or wish you had).

PLATINUM GAMES	ISSUE	SCORE
Chrono Cross	August 2000	99%
SSX Snowboarding (PS2)	November 2000	99%
The Legend of Dragoon	July 2000	99%
Madden NFL 2001 (PS2)	November 2000	98%
Parasite Eve 2	October 2000	98%
Smuggler's Run (PS2)	November 2000	98%
Spyro Year of the Dragon	November 2000	98%
Tekken Tag Tournament (PS2)	December 2000	98%
Tony Hawk Pro Skater 2	December 2000	98%
GOLD GAMES	**ISSUE**	**SCORE**
Gekido	July 2000	97%
Rayman 2: The Great Escape	August 2000	97%
Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX	December 2000	96%
Destruction Derby Raw	December 2000	96%
FIFA 2001 (PS2)	December 2000	96%
Looney Tunes Racing	December 2000	96%
Midnight Club (PS2)	December 2000	96%
NFL Gameday 2001	September 2000	96%
Dino Crisis 2	December 2000	95%
Medal of Honor Underground	December 2000	95%
Ridge Racer V (PS2)	November 2000	95%
MLB 2001	June 2000	94%
Spiderman	October 2000	94%
Star Trek Invasion	November 2000	94%
Summoner (PS2)	December 2000	94%
Ballbreakers	September 2000	93%
Grind Session	July 2000	93%
Gun Griffon Blaze (PS2)	December 2000	93%
Legend of Mana	August 2000	93%
Moto GP (PS2)	December 2000	93%
Muppet Race Mania	November 2000	93%
NCAA Gamebreaker 2001	September 2000	93%
Swing Away Golf (PS2)	November 2000	93%
Team Buddies	December 2000	93%
Tenchu 2: Birth of the Assassins	October 2000	93%
Crash Bash	December 2000	92%
RC Revenge	October 2000	92%
Time Splitters (PS2)	December 2000	92%
Valkryie Profile	September 2000	92%
Wild Arms II	July 2000	92%
Bust-a-Groove 2	September 2000	90%
Caesar's Palace 2000	September 2000	90%
Eternal Ring (PS2)	November 2000	90%
Evergrace (PS2)	July 2000	90%
Ms. Pac-Man: Maze Madness	October 2000	90%
Nightmare Creatures II	July 2000	90%
Test Drive Le Mans	July 2000	90%
The World is Not Enough	December 2000	90%
Tigger's Honey Hunt	December 2000	90%
SILVER GAMES	**ISSUE**	**SCORE**
Dynasty Warriors 2 (PS2)	November 2000	89%
Silent Scope (PS2)	November 2000	89%
Sno Cross Championship Racing	October 2000	89%
Cool Boarders 2001	December 2000	88%
Donald Duck:Goin' Quackers	December 2000	88%
Evergrace (PS2)	November 2000	88%
FIFA Soccer World Cup	August 2000	88%
Striker Pro 2000	June 2000	88%
Alien Resurrection	October 2000	87%
Wild Wild Racing (PS2)	December 2000	87%
X-Men: Mutant Academy	September 2000	87%
Frogger 2	November 2000	86%
Rollcage Stage 2	December 2000	86%
Rampage Through Time	September 2000	85%
RayCrisis: Series Termination	December 2000	85%
Rhapsody: A Musical Adventure	July 2000	85%
Threads of Fate	August 2000	85%
Tyco R/C: Assault with a Battery	December 2000	85%
Army Men: Air Attack 2	December 2000	84%
Dragon Valor (PS2)	November 2000	84%
Expendable	July 2000	84%
Koudelka	August 2000	84%
MTV Sports Skateboarding	December 2000	84%
Orphen (PS2)	December 2000	84%
X Squad (PS2)	November 2000	84%
Covert Ops: Nuclear Dawn	July 2000	83%
Fantavision (PS2)	December 2000	83%
MegaMan Legends 2	December 2000	83%
Mr. Driller	June 2000	83%
Ultimate Fighting Championship	December 2000	83%
Monster Rancher Battle Card Pro	August 2000	82%
Grudge Warriors	July 2000	81%
Pro Pinball: Fantastic Journey & Big Race USA	October 2000	81%
The Grinch	December 2000	81%
Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?	August 2000	81%
Action Bass	October 2000	80%
Arena Football Unleashed	July 2000	80%
Gradius III & IV (PS2)	December 2000	80%
Surf Rider	August 2000	80%
BRONZE GAMES	**ISSUE**	**SCORE**
Street Fighter EX3 (PS2)	December 2000	79%
N.Gen Racing	August 2000	77%
Spec Ops: Stealth Patrol	July 2000	77%
Army Men World War	June 2000	76%
Countdown: Vampires	June 2000	76%
MTV Sports Pure Ride	December 2000	76%
WCW Backstage Assault	December 2000	75%
Dinosaur	September 2000	74%
Armored Core 2 (PS2)	December 2000	73%
NHL 2001 (PS2)	December 2000	73%
NCAA Football 2001	October 2000	72%
Gradius III & IV (PS2)	July 2000	71%
Mike Tyson Boxing	December 2000	70%
Real Pool (PS2)	December 2000	70%
Runabout 2	August 2000	70%
TIN GAMES	**ISSUE**	**SCORE**
RPG Maker	August 2000	69%
Resident Evil Survivor	December 2000	59%
Sammy Sosa Softball Slam	June 2000	51%
Armorines	July 2000	43%
MLS Game Night	September 2000	41%
Primal Image	August 2000	34%
Sky Surfer (PS2)	July 2000	1%

what do all those numbers mean?

98-100%
The ultimate gaming experience.

90-97%
"Must buy" games; each carries our editor's seal of approval and are recommended for fans of that genre.

80-89%
Good games, but lacking in some area; only for fans of that style of game.

70-79%
Mediocre titles that suffer from some serious flaws. Rent – don't buy.

0-69%
Tin games are to be avoided at all costs. Only die-hard gamers would buy these.

FINAL WORD

David Jon Winding • Publisher

THE OTHER SHOE

I have to begin this column by making a correction to last month's. The PS2 that I had ordered online from Gamestop.com back in May arrived a couple of days after launch, in spite of the fact that they had told me I wouldn't be receiving it. Why? How did this happen? I don't know, but I'm glad it did. Suffice it to say that they are now back in my good graces and that I will again be shopping in their little corner of the cyber-universe.

By most accounts, Sony is indeed making their weekly shipments to North American retailers, but (as of mid-November) you are still hard-pressed to find a PS2 actually sitting on a retailer's shelves. Of course, you will have no problem finding games. At this point, there are 30 games that have shipped and they are really fighting for the attention of the 700,000 (guess) PS2 owners in our territory. Madden, SSX and TTT are doing well, but there is a serious drop-off in sales as you move further down the list. Will this change over time? Not likely; As I stated last month, there are going to be 50 games available by the time you read this — with only about 1,000,000 customers to purchase these games. If you are a software bargain hunter, you might be able to make some moves after the first of the year.

The problem isn't with the installed base and the number of hardware units that Sony has shipped in the US and Canada. Rather, it's the fact that third party publishers have become prematurely bullish on the POTENTIAL installed base of the PS2. I Remember when the Genesis launched in 1989 — there were FIVE games available for the system, and they were all from Sega. With PS2, there were 26 games at launch and a total of 50 within the next six weeks — that's simply out of control. Add to this equation the fact that Sony is only responsible for one (Fantavision) of the 50 games and you can see how much the industry has changed in the last decade.

In addition, none of the launch games could be classified as a "killer application." PS2 does not have its Mario at launch. It has some very cool games, and some very good ones, but none that has completely captured the collective imagination of the installed base. You want an RPG? Hey, PS2's got four from which you can choose. Need a football game? There are two to choose from (Madden and GameDay), with another one waiting in the wings (ESPN). There are also two snowboarding games, half a dozen driving games, two FPS's, three fighting games, two mech. games — you get the picture.

It seems that, in a collective effort to be the first with product on the market, the third party software publishers that have supported Sony's effort have each rushed in to fill what they felt would be a tremendous void — only to realize that the gaping hole was more like a pin prick.

So you see kids, you're not the only ones that fall victim to the emotion of the moment. The guys that make the games you and I play saw dollar signs dancing in their heads and, understandably so, had to try and get a piece of the pie — they just didn't know that the pie would end up being a single cookie, and that they would be fighting over it with dozens of other ravenous kids.

Dave

dwinding@psextreme.com

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You know the rules.

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PlayStation®2

湾岸 MIDNIGHT CLUB
STREET RACING

"an amazing sense of reality....one of several must-haves for PS2 launch"
- Gamer's Republic, Sept 2000

"an exhilarating experience, one that you'd expect to get from the latest Hollywood big budget chase scene, Rather than a console racing game"
- Next Generation, June 2000

There are no rules.

In secret gatherings around the world a mysterious group of urban street racers, known as the Midnight Club, race for pride, power and glory in sleekly customized, tricked-out sports cars. Speeding through crowded streets, running red lights, terrorizing pedestrians, driving on sidewalks and outrunning the cops are just the basics for the "Midnight Club".

- Racing action in two accurately modeled cities on both sides of the Atlantic - New York and London!
- 17 different performance enhanced cars to race - concept prototypes, foreign sports cars, muscle cars and pickup trucks.
- Play in a persistent world - with interactive traffic, pedestrians and law enforcement.
- Win the pink slips of opposing players! Rise up through the ranks in the illicit world of the Midnight Club.
- Winning cars are tuned up with equipment from street-racing specialists such as Dimmer, VeilSide, Zender, Neuspeed, Wings West and more....

www.rockstargames.com/midnightclub

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Angel STUDIOS counterbalance

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TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB — Animated Violence

TWO WARRING NATIONS...

A MISSING PRINCESS...

BREATH OF FIRE IV

AN EPIC QUEST FOR PEACE.

After centuries of war, the two lands bordering an impenetrable swampland have finally reached an armistice. Mysteriously, the noble princess Elena disappears somewhere near the war-ravaged front lines. Distraught, her sister Nina goes in search of the Princess alone and on her journey, meets a mysterious, young warrior named Ryu. Their destinies soon entwine. The next chapter in the epic tale of magic and mystery now unfolds. The fate of what lies ahead rests in your control.

"VISUALLY BREATHTAKING!"
-Game Pro Magazine

Two epic intertwining storylines—Follow the fates of Ryu and Fou-Lu—a classic RPG adventure.

Choose your allies well. Gain experience and master the skills needed to survive in this epic 3-D world.

Release the dragon within...more than 200 spells to learn and master.

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Animated Violence

PlayStation

CAPCOM EDGE

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